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The Popular Magazine

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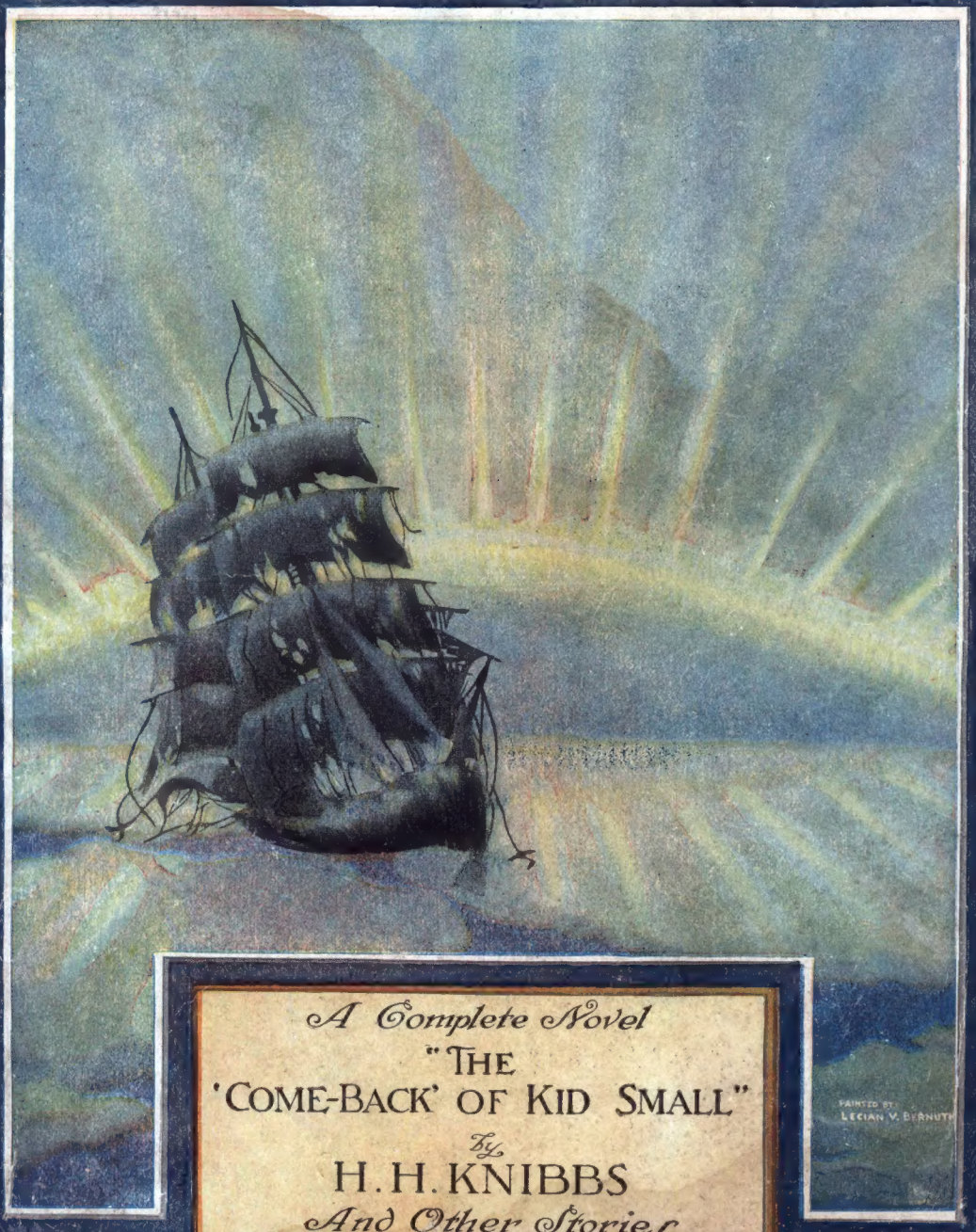

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By

H. H. KNIBBS

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TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

Vol. LV. No. 2 — January 7, 1920

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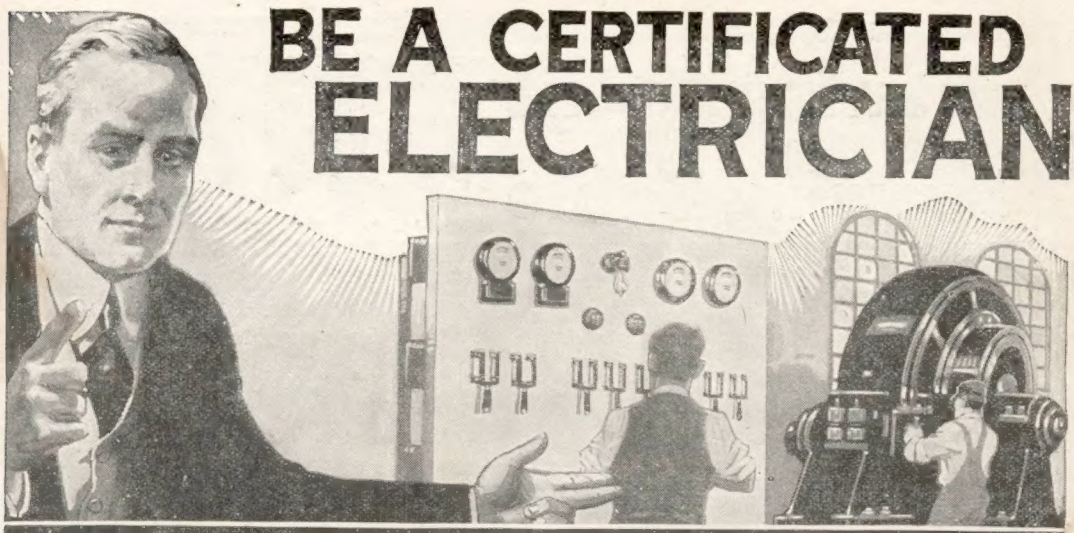

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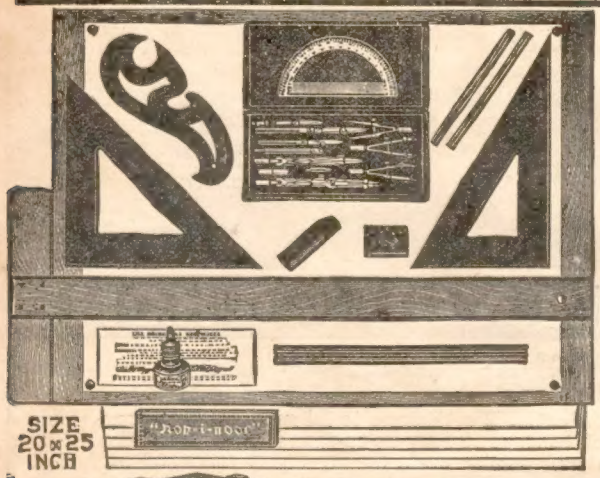

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LV. JANUARY 7, 1920. No. 2.

The "Come-Back" of Kid Small

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

Author of "The Ridin' Kid From Powder River," Etc.

This is one of those stories which make your blood tingle. It is a man's novel from beginning to end. Kid Small is as unlikely a hero as you might meet in a day's walk. He seems hopeless, any way you take him. That is, any way but one, which is just what Billy Burton does. And Billy Burton is something of a hero, too, with his ambition to make men over. Needless to add, it is a story of the West. Knibbs is one of the few writers who is able to give us the real West right in our hands, so to speak.

(A Complete Novel)

BILLY BURTON had youth, optimism, and a sense of humor. He had little else, save an old gray saddle pony, a pack burro, and a camping outfit which he had purchased from the town storekeeper. Billy wondered why he had purchased the animals and outfit. He knew next to nothing about the West, the trails, and the grazing, the sultry cañons that depressed, the sluggish, dying streams that offered tainted water when summer burned through the willows and bred mosquitoes and flies; the shale slides, the rain cuts of abandoned trails, the winter snows of the high country; nor had he an overdeveloped sense of direction. The burro, the camping outfit and his sense of humor were sound—but the old gray and Billy were not. The old gray had a slight, permanent limp. Billy had a cough. The doctors had told him to go West.

From the desert town where he was slowly recovering from the effects of his overland journey, Billy could see distant, blue-topped ranges that seemed always to sing in the wind and sunshine. One peak, especially, interested him. He imagined that on that far, high peak was *the something* that he had determined to find. It was then that his sense of humor told him to look in the glass. The glass told him that the man he was looking at was in no condition to climb mountain peaks. But his optimism told him to take a tepid bath and a rub with a rough towel. He did. That afternoon he had ventured out. He saw the old gray pony dozing in the corral back of the store, and alongside the pony an indescribable burro with a nick in one ear and a charming indifference to the scenery of southern California, that at once won Billy's heart. Figuratively and literally the burro was pretty well fed up on scenery.

Usually one plans a trip, then buys or rents animals and outfit. Billy bought the old gray pony, the burro, and the outfit; and then his sense of humor told him he could stand around and watch them loaf and eat—or he could pack the burro, saddle the pony, and go somewhere. His will to live was urging him to adventure. Sheer, animal instinct was tugging at him to draw him away from himself, from the town and the bed wherein he had lain day after day, wondering if he would ever get up again. He gazed long at the distant peak, the name of which, the storekeeper told him, was Chilao.

"Somebody made a mistake," said Billy. "That's also the name of this town."

"Yep. She's named after the peak."

"Too bad."

"Why, what's wrong with the name?" queried the storekeeper.

"Nothing. And there's nothing wrong with the peak."

"Then you don't like this town, eh?"

"I might—from up there."

"Lungs?" queried the storekeeper.

"Yes. But they're mine yet. They don't belong to the municipality, and they are not up for discussion. I suppose you have a liver? Well, I don't care. It's your liver. You don't look like a socialist. Keep it. I'm paying for these things. All I ask of you is to tell me how to get to that peak."

"But say, young fella, you can't make it, the way you are."

"I can try."

"Why don't you hire a guide; somebody to pack and wrangle stock for you?"

"Because, Mr. Ward, just at present you possess the major portion of my patrimony. All I have left is seven dollars and my soul. Fools rush in—and I'm going to rush. If the angels come whispering around, later, up there on Chilao, why, that should not worry any one down here. Don't look startled. I'm perfectly all right in my head and my heart—and that's something. Would you show me how to pack these things on the donkey?"

Ward packed the burro and saddled the horse. He had made enough on the sale to pay him for that trouble. "You're takin' a long chanct," he told Billy. "Got any relations back East?"

"Fortunately, none."

"I'm thinkin' the same," said Ward, who felt that this "lunger" was a little too brisk in his talk.

Billy smiled. "What do you call the horse?"

"Sam."

"And the donkey?"

"We call 'em burros, in this country."

"Thanks. So long."

"So long, young fella. If I was you——"

"Heaven forbid!" Billy got into the saddle somehow. The burro, who was an old-timer, immediately took his place ahead of the gray. Billy thought the burro should have followed, like a dog. But the burro seemed so sure of himself as a leader, and the old gray seemed so willing to follow, that Billy made no effort to rearrange their positions. He felt quietly elated as he began the ascent of the arroyo trail back of town. When they reached a fork in the trail, the burro stopped. Ward had told Billy that the left-hand trail led to an abandoned mine, the other, on up to Chilao.

"Hit the trail, burro!" said Billy.

The little pack animal turned its head, gazed back at the old gray, and then rubbed his nose on his foreleg.

"He's deliberating. He's not hasty. He's ——" Billy laughed harshly and coughed. "He's not a fool. He wants a reason. I don't. Get along, burro!"

But the burro stood still, occasionally rubbing his nose on his foreleg.

"What is the sign, when a fellow's nose itches? I forget. Perhaps he won't move until I call him something more intimate than burro. 'Plato?' No that would degenerate into 'Plate.' And 'Socrates' would become 'Socks' in no time. 'Euripides' sounds safe. 'Euripides,' get along up that trail! No? Well, I'll ride ahead, then."

Billy rode round the burro, who still declined to move. The burro drooped one ear and gazed at Billy, who simply had to grin.

"Rip! get a move on!"

The burro immediately turned and plodded up the trail.

"And I tried to get him going with 'Euripides!' He didn't come from Boston. Henceforth, my gray philosopher, beloved hobo of the dunes, delight of children, thistle-chewing seer, your name is 'Rip.' Sam and Rip. Sounds like trouble—as though something might get torn. Well, we'll camp somewhere up there to-night, make a fire and some coffee and fry bacon and"—Billy breathed deep—"and Sam and Rip can find their way back alone, if necessary."

There was that possibility, as Billy knew. Yet his optimism would have none of it.

"We're going on up," said his optimism.

"Even if we go up in smoke," said his sense of humor.

Weary beyond words, yet buoyed up somehow by the thought of to-morrow and the distant peak, Billy rode slowly up the arroyo until the long shadows halted him near the head of the stream, where there was grass on a level bench of land along the hillside. Far below, the little town lay like a toy dropped carelessly by a child tired of trying to arrange the tiny houses in some kind of symmetrical plan that had not worked out.

Billy got stiffly from the saddle and sat

down. The old gray gently nuzzled Billy's shoulder as a hint that he could graze better with the bridle off. The burro stood stolidly waiting to be unpacked.

"It wouldn't be fair to tie you," said Billy. "But if I don't, I suppose you'll both stray back home." He did not know that Sam and Rip had tasted very little green feed that season: that they would be more inclined to graze up the arroyo than down it. He unsaddled, unpacked the burro, and turned the animals loose. From the mess of tangled lash rope he took his blankets and food. The old gray shook himself and began to nip at the lush grass along the stream. The burro eyed the provisions. Billy was not familiar with the habits of burros, but gave him a cracker, not aware that the surest way to cinch up a burro's fidelity is to feed him scraps from camp. He may stray and graze, but he will always come back for more scraps.

Finally the burro strayed off after Sam. Billy stepped to the stream and drank. He was not hungry, and he was too tired to make a fire, so he ate some crackers and cold canned soup. Yet that night he slept well, and awakened at daylight with an appetite. Sam and Rip were not in sight, but Billy did not worry. He made a small fire, and with coffee and crackers and bacon, satisfied his hunger. Then he set out to search for the animals.

When he had turned them loose the night before he noticed that they had started to graze upstream.

Without thinking to look for tracks, he trailed along the creek, climbing slowly. A few hundred yards above his camp the trail left the arroyo and swept up and over a knoll. He kept to the trail, along which animal tracks showed plainly, although he failed to notice them. Rounding a heavily brushed angle he almost bumped into Rip, who was standing with his back to the morning sun, evidently contented with life to the full, if his girth was any indication of his feelings. Billy was both out of breath and overjoyed to have found the burro so easily. It seemed like meeting an old friend unexpectedly.

"Crackers?" said Billy.

Rip seemed to understand. He followed Billy down the trail and into camp where Billy gave him a cracker. Rip munched lazily, too full to enjoy it, but too much of a burro to refuse it.

Then Billy's troubles began. He had watched Ward carefully when he packed the burro. It had seemed easy enough. But now, the two kyacks, the packsaddle, the bed roll, and the lank, inanimate rope seemed as far beyond reconciliation as day and night. They simply could not exist together. It was easy enough to cinch on the packsaddle. It was easy enough to hang the kyacks on the crosstrees. But when that appalling bed roll had to be handled! It slipped off. It crumpled and unrolled. It caught in the pack harness. Billy heaved it up. It flopped over and he stepped on it and wondered what made it so heavy. Finally he sat down and gazed at it, as it lay like some prehistoric wampus, basking in the sun. Billy did more than bask. He worked himself into a good sweat. Finally he managed to make the bed roll stay, and began to throw a hitch—a wonderful hitch, compared with which the hammock stitch would have looked as austere as a Quaker's necktie. Each time Billy crossed the rope he knotted it—so that it would hold. He knew he had made too many knots. Ward had made none save the final turn and hitch to hold the end of the rope. Meanwhile Rip stood patiently suffering the indignity of being packed by this strange individual; and Rip, long-suffering, manifested his displeasure by laying back his ears and fidgeting with his left hind foot, a gentle hint which was lost on the sweating and active Billy who was never in one position long enough to afford a fair target.

The pack was a wonderful contraption, huge, lop-sided, and bulging in spots. Billy viewed it with some satisfaction and considerable curiosity. His worldly possessions seemed to have increased twofold overnight.

Billy had quite forgotten Sam in the immediate anxiety attending to Rip. But as Billy sat gazing at the trail while he recovered from his first effort at packing a burro, he saw tracks, the tracks of a shod horse. One of the hoofprints was blurred where the burro had stepped on it. Then and there Billy learned his first lesson in tracking. The horse had gone up the trail first, or the burro could not have stepped in his tracks.

Sam had been more energetic than the burro, having a bigger stomach to fill. Billy found him grazing on a little flat beneath some live oaks far up the hillside. The old gray raised his head, gazed at Billy as

though he had expected to see him sooner or later, and went to grazing again. But Sam was not to be coaxed to camp by the proffer of a cracker. Billy had not thought to fetch a rope, so he unbuckled his belt and slipped it round Sam's neck. Sam at once recognized the authority of leather and came quietly along. Billy began to realize that he had made more physical effort that morning than he had almost all the past year.

Chilao's peak was now hidden by intervening ridges. Billy would not be able to see it again until he had climbed much higher. And the fact that he could not now see the peak stimulated him to further effort. He had set out to reach that peak. His optimism told him to keep at it. His sense of humor told him that there were some stars nearer the earth than others. He saddled Sam, rested a minute or two, and then climbed clumsily into the saddle. Immediately he was notified of a set of muscles that he had not known he possessed. Rip took his place ahead of the horse and started up the slope. Billy forgot Chilao for the time being, in his enjoyment of the wild flowers of the upper reaches, the purple of the lupins, the bright native red of the Indian paint brush, the little blue flowers that clung close to the ground, and pale-yellow bloom as delicate as sunshine in a forest. These children of the spring were good to look upon. Suddenly Billy saw his first yucca, a great stalk, eight or ten feet high, with its candelabra of silver-white bells that seemed to tinkle in the sunlight. And Billy Burton, erstwhile a poorly paid clerk in a dingy bookstore, dreamed dreams of a Something in the big hills that would heal him and quiet his troubled spirit—for Billy wanted to live.

His sense of humor, always alert, appreciated the quaint attitudes of the little lizards of the rocks, and he spoke to them as he plodded past. When he spoke, the old gray laid back one ear, wondering what that strange jargon meant. He was doing his work. The words were not for him.

Then, without warning—Billy most naturally, had not learned to keep his eye on his pack animal—the pack began to slip. Rip, who had despised the precariously balanced pack all along, promptly began to get rid of that pack. He bucked over a fair hundred yards of brush country, distributing blankets, pots, pans, and provisions "In trans. Ad lib." without the slightest regard for the proprieties. Presently he stopped and went to grazing, casually, the pack-saddle hanging under him and the rope twisted and dragging. Billy dismounted and began to collect his effects. He was busily searching for the coffeepot, having found some of the larger utensils, when a voice startled him. He glanced up. Before him stood a ruddy, red-headed man of about his own age. The ruddy one held the reins of a fine saddle animal loosely in one hand, and skillfully rolled a cigarette with the other. His mouth was grave, although his blue eyes twinkled.

"Prospectin'?" He queried gently.

"Hello! I didn't hear you arrive. Yes, I'm prospecting for hardware."

"Just breakin' camp, eh?"

"I suppose that's what you would call it. The pack slipped. You didn't meet a stray coffeepot on your way over, did you?"

"Nope. But there's one hangin' on that manzanita, right over your head."

"Thanks. My name is Burton."

"I'm Jimmy Gale—mostly Jimmy, up here."

"Glad to meet you. I suppose this had to happen, sooner or later: I mean the performance that Rip just gave. I don't know the first thing about the hills, or the trails, or riding, or packing, or camping. But I'm going to learn. If you will show me how to make a pack, and a hitch that will hold, I'll be grateful. Ward, down there, packed for me yesterday. I camped in the arroyo last night. I'm going up to Chilao."

"Ain't you the fella that's been sick down to the hotel?"

"Yes."

"And you set out alone, kind of puttin' all your trust in Providence instead of in your hitch, eh?"

"That's about it."

"Uh-huh? Where did you start to git rid of your stuff?"

"At the bend, there. The blankets went first. Then I saw the coffeepot go up, but I didn't see it come down. My Dutch oven is over there, somewhere. I heard it jingle on the rocks. Then there are a few other things."

"A few. You set down and rest. This sun is tol'able hot."

"Oh, I'm all right. I can't sit still and watch you hunt my things."

"No? Well, you can try. You take it easy. I know about where to prospect for

your stuff. I had experience in that line, plenty."

"Did you ever have a pack slip?"

"You look like you'd be kind of glad to hear me say I did." And he of the red head and blue eyes grinned. "Slip? Say, 'slip' ain't the word for it. You just ought to see a real, ornery pack hoss git rid of his load. Like a fella said oncet:

"He bowed his head and humped his back,
Jumped straight up and drug in the slack,
Then sunned his side and shed his pack.

"Why, oncet I trailed a bronc from that ridge over there clean to town, pickin' up Dutch ovens and canned goods and dishes and blankets and cartridges that he shed from a pack that was cinched up right. The scenery looked like one of them mail-order catalogues, something different on every page. When I got to town the storekeeper which had the store afore Ward, was settin' on his front steps tryin' to straighten out the lid of a kettle which he says come sailin' down just as my bronc loped up to the rail. Said he knowed it wasn't his 'cause he didn't sell that kind. Why, what your burro done was jest to step out from under his pack. You ought to see a broomtail git rid of his worries! You're in luck!"

"I am—to meet you. I'm mighty grateful——"

Jimmy Gale held up his hand. "That's all right, hombre. But don't say it. Makes me feel better."

And Jimmy Gale, erstwhile puncher, prospector, guide, philosopher, and friend of Benny Benito, set about to find the dispersed effects of the stranger who looked "kind of peakedlike and tired," and who frankly admitted that he knew nothing whatever about the game. "Which don't do him no hurt with me," Jimmy muttered as he fetched a crumpled tin plate from a bush. "I kin stand most anything but a fella that brags on knowin' somethin', even when he does."

Jimmy Gale had started for town that morning because he had nothing else to do at the time. He thought he would visit Los Angeles, take in a picture show or two, look up an old friend, and then return to Benito's cabin in the cañon. Jimmy was supposed to be recuperating from the effects of a pretty severe wound. He had been in the hospital several weeks, primarily because of a warm and unrepressed bottle of ginger ale which he had unwittingly targeted on the person of an old prospector who had failed to see the joke. The report of the ginger-ale bottle and the impact of the cork on his eye had startled the prospector to action—and he was notably quick on the trigger. While Jimmy was in the hospital his friend Benito, the Mexican, had trailed the prospector to the Bad Lands. Benito had come back alone.

Meanwhile Jimmy had been recovering in the hospital, until the monotony became too much for him. Against the advice of the surgeon he had risen and fared forth, helped in his conspiracy against medicine, by Benito. Jimmy had regained his health rapidly in the mountain air. Also, he was redheaded, which helped amazingly.

And now, as he poked about searching for the scattered camp utensils, he whistled softly—a sign that he was thinking hard. The tenderfoot was in no condition to undertake a journey to Chilao alone. It was rugged country up there, inviting disaster for the inexperienced. Jimmy argued with himself that it was none of his business. And he argued that it *was* his business to help any one or any living thing that was in difficulties. Jimmy happened to be made that way. His greatest fear was that he would be thanked for his voluntary service. He detested being thanked for doing anything, especially for lending a hand when a hand was needed. Well, he would repack the burro and get the tenderfoot started in the right direction.

Because Jimmy Gale disliked to be thanked, his manner was abrupt, almost taciturn as he showed Billy how to throw a good hitch after properly balancing the pack. Jimmy rode on down the trail. Billy Burton thought, mistakenly, that the Westerner was glad to be gone before something else happened. In reality, Jimmy had all but invited Burton to stop at Benito's cabin, a short ride off the high trail to Chilao.

As Billy rode slowly up the long grade he noticed that the grazing was becoming scant, that the rocks outcropped more frequently, that the heat was more intense. The patches of powdered gray granite were dotted with Spanish bayonet and greasewood. Buckthorn was in bloom, its delicate, lavender-hued flower mildly suggesting the lilac of the East. But Billy soon lost interest in the natural beauty of the hills. The insistent sun struck down upon him, until high noon halted him at a fork in the

trail, on a barren ridge from which he could see into a cañon to the left, and at its bottom a tiny stream fringed with alders. To the north, far away, rose the blue-topped peak of Chilao, seemingly more remote than ever. He was not hungry, but a sense of emptiness oppressed him. The first stimulus of adventure had evaporated. He felt heavy, faint, and disgusted with the burden of his physical self. And down there, where the cool alders twinkled, was shade and rest: and secondary excuse to tarry, feed for the animals. For the first time in his life it occurred to Billy that a horse or a burro might come to feel as heavy-limbed, faint, and disgusted with its burden as he did himself. With the excuse that Sam and Rip needed feed and rest, he turned and gazed at the distant peak: then he called to the burro and headed him down the cañon trail.

Benito, whom his brother Mexicans called "the lion of the mountains"—Benito, who was kind to animals, making no distinction as to the number of legs they possessed, was Jimmy Gale's partner and friend. Benito was plaiting a rawhide bridle and humming an old song, when his black burro brayed a challenge to some one or something visible to his far-seeing eye. Benito glanced up from his work, then drew the wet rawhide strands through his fingers till he came to the knot in the cheek piece. He got up, hung the bridle in the shade, and stepped round his cabin. The burros seldom brayed at high noon. Possibly the black had seen Jimmy on the trail above.

Far up Benito saw a burro, packed, and following it slowly a horse and rider. The horse limped slightly. It was the storekeeper's old gray, but that weaving, wavering figure was not Ward. Ward would not be packing a burro into the cañon. Benito scratched his head, and turned back to the plaiting of the bridle.

A half hour—and the rider should have been at the cabin, but no rider appeared. Benito rose and again hung the bridle in the shade. "I make to find where he go." Pausing to drink from the olla, he turned and strode up the trail, disappearing in the high brush of the slope.

Halfway to the top he came upon the burro contentedly sunning himself. Farther along, in a small opening, he found the old gray. The saddle had slipped. The reins still hung on the horn. Peering from side to side, Benito stepped up and spoke to the horse. Near the horse he saw the sole of a boot sticking out of the brush.

"Some hombre he make the fall, I think. But Santa Maria! It is an old horse and a good trail! I find out."

Billy Burton had "made the fall" suddenly and silently. He had been looking at the cabin below, the corral and the burros, when the cabin had begun to rock and teeter strangely. In his last flash of consciousness, Billy had thought that he had lain down quietly to rest. Unconsciously he had grabbed at the saddle horn as he fell. The old gray had scarcely moved from the spot.

Benito found that this stranger was not injured. He had fallen into the brush. But Benito realized that the man was sick. His lips were blue and his face was the color of wet buckskin.

"I fix him!" said Benito cheerfully. He lifted the limp form and laid it across the saddle. Billy would have laughed could he have seen himself draped ludicrously across Sam, his heels dangling on one side and his arms on the other. But Benny Benito saw no humor in the situation. His idea was to get this man to the cabin as quickly as possible.

When Billy opened his eyes he was on a low bed from which he could see a patch of blue through the open doorway and in the doorway a Mexican smoking a cigarette. The man's back was toward Billy, who gazed enviously at the compact shoulders, the strong brown neck, and the outline of cheek and jaw that told of solid strength. Too listless to speak, he gazed round the cabin. A string of chilis hung from a rafter. A faded serape hung from another rafter. On the table was a coffeepot.

Billy could smell the faint aroma of coffee. He licked his dry lips. "I remember some one pouring some of that down me, not long ago," he murmured.

His eyes wandered to a silver-studded bridle on the wall. Near the bridle hung a rifle in its worn and battered scabbard. An old sombrero hung on the saddle horn. In one corner were packsaddles and ropes, neatly coiled. And there was his packsaddle, glaringly new and white among the faded brown trees of the other saddles. Billy raised on his elbow.

"I'm feeling better," he said.

Benito turned. "Bueno! That coffee he fix you good, I think. Me, I find you sleep

in the brush, yes? It is more good to sleep in this place."

"I believe you," said Billy, too weak to smile. "I'll be all right in a little while. Sorry to make you all this trouble."

"You don' make the trouble. You sick hombre. I see. You no can help, yes? Then Benito he help."

"I've read about good Samaritans, and all that. But I didn't know it really happened."

Benito did not understand. "Perhaps it is that you sleep some more, yes? Then you have the strong again. Me, I Benny Benito. I make the friend to all mans that is sick, and the horse and the burro."

"Did you look after Sam and Rip?"

"Them horse and burro? Me, I don't *look* after him. I put him in the corral, where he eat."

Billy's eyelids fluttered. He breathed heavily. Benito still sat in the doorway gazing across the cañon. Presently he rose and stepped quietly to the bed. Billy was asleep. Benito unlaced and drew off the heavy boots. He laid a light blanket over the sleeping man, for he knew that the chill of reaction would set in, despite the heat of the day. Then he stepped out and drank from the olla. The old gray was grazing out in the pasture. The burro was standing with his head across the fence, full-fed and lazy. The shadows lengthened, spreading from the western cañon wall in long fan-shaped patches. It was quiet, serene, restful, even as was the soul of Benny Benito the Mexican, whose dark eyes reflected the kindly light of sympathy with all living creatures.

Billy coughed in his sleep. Benito nodded knowingly. "I fix him," he said, and he smiled. He knew what that cough meant, and in his simple-hearted way, he thought of the stranger only as some one who was afflicted and needed help. Benito did not know who Billy was or what he was, other than that he was sick. To have been curious about the ancestry and habits of Billy would have been as absurd to Benito as it would have been to question the pedigree and temperament of some stray horse or burro that was hurt or sick, before giving it attention. Benito had lived long in the hills, and he saw things in a big way. And, to digress briefly, when a Mexican is a friend, there is no more faithful or enduring friend in the world.

Passing on down to the corral, Benito came to where Rip loafed in the sun. Benito stopped and talked with the burro. Was not the Señor Burro a guest among strangers? Benito chuckled. "You stop on those trail, I think, for the rest when that hombre he fall down the horse. But that good horse he stop for something is wrong. He know. You go and make talk to that blanco caballo and he say to you he do that, yes? Perhaps it is that some day you learn those good trick from that horse. Then it is when you fall down, he wait."

Rip let one ear droop and, lowering his head, scratched the drooping ear with his hind foot, to dislodge a woodtick. Benito chuckled again. "You think about what I say, yes?"

He strode on down to the spring and was filling a bucket with fresh water for cooking when he happened to glance up toward the cañon trail. Far above he saw the sunlight glint on a big bay horse whose rider sat straight and easy, swinging down the grade from turn to turn. Benito cupped his hands and gave the call of the coyote. The rider answered. Benito tilted his overfilled bucket and straightened up.

"I have all those good friend. Me, I'm lucky mans. The Señor Jim he is get well. Them horse and them burro he fat. We sell those mine and the money, yes? Now it is that we talk to fix it so that that sick hombre he go good some day."

And presently Billy was awakened by voices. He saw the doorway filled by a ruddy, red-headed man, the man whom he had met on the trail that day and who now chucked his hat in one corner and his spurs in another and, stepping to the bed, grinned down at Billy.

"I was set to tell you to ride down here, when I met up with you this mornin'—but you beat me to it. And I reckon you found the right place, pardner. Benny, here, and me, would 'a' been sore of you'd 'a' gone on up to Chilao without stoppin' by to say 'How.' I was askin' about you down to town. Just make yourself to home."

And Jimmy Gale turned abruptly and left the cabin. He was afraid the sick man would thank him.

CHAPTER II.

Jimmy Gale sat watching Billy hoe beans in the garden patch near the cabin. Billy

worked along steadily from row to row, until he came to the corral fence, where he paused and, resting his elbows on the rail, gazed across the cañon. Something in his attitude attracted Jimmy's attention. Billy had grown stronger in the hills. His color was more even, and in the set of his shoulders was the unmistakable sign of improvement. Six weeks of simple diet, outdoor air, pure water, and mild exercise had done for him what no physician could do. Then, the placid companionship of Benito and the sprightly presence of Jimmy had made his stay both interesting and possible. Yet, Jimmy saw that something bothered Billy, that he was not altogether content.

Billy realized that these men were virtually supporting him. The little work he did hardly paid for his food. And Sam and Rip were getting fat in Benito's pasture. Billy had spoken of leaving, a few days before, but both Jimmy and Benito had insisted that they needed him—a most flagrant excuse to make him feel at home and under no obligation. But this morning, as he rested, surreptitiously feeling of his biceps and smiling because there was something there to feel, he realized that, even if he were welcome to stay, he could not do so and face the morning looking-glass much longer. Jimmy saw that something of the kind was bothering Billy, so Jimmy straightway picked up his hat and sauntered to the cabin. Benito was making tortillas that would become enchiladas about dinner time. Jimmy pulled up a chair and sat down.

"Benny, our little old ranch foreman out there ain't just what you'd call crazy about stayin' here much longer."

Benito smiled. "I know that for long time."

"Well, you needn't to flip and flop them tortillas around so sassy, just as if I didn't know nothin'. What we goin' to do?"

"I think it is that we eat them enchiladas, yes?"

"Oh, all *right!* You sure are the little Bo-Peep when it comes to not worryin'. Ever hear of that child? She was some sheep-herder."

"No, I don't hear. Was she live in California, yes?"

"Darned if I know. But accordin' to the storybook, when she lost her bunch of woolies, why all she says was, 'Leave 'em alone and they'll come back a draggin' their tails behind 'em.' "

"Somebody stampede them sheep, yes?"

"I reckon so."

Benito balanced a tortilla in his hand and gazed hard at Jimmy. "Them nice story for muchacha. You say him for you don' want say what you think. You want Benito to say."

"Well, seein' as you're elected, go ahead and say it."

"We buy some sheep, yes? Then he have job with them sheep?"

"Nope! He ain't got enough mañana in his system to make a herder. He's got to keep movin' around lively."

"Them ranger he go some. You think he make the ranger job all right?"

Jimmy punctuated his hesitancy with a frown as he pulled out tobacco and papers. "Well, he'd feel more independent. But he don't know nothin' about the ranger game. And there's the examination, which don't come up till next year. He might get a job this summer, doin' fire-patrol work. He'd get to know the country, and he might get strong enough to work on a trail crew, later, and get some real experience. I reckon I'll saddle up and go see Simpson. You needn't say anything to Billy."

"Perhaps it is that you find the job and Billy he don' like him, yes?"

"There's somethin' to that. Guess I'll talk to Billy first."

Jimmy, who did not want to be misunderstood, approached Billy and the subject with what he considered extreme delicacy. "Me and Benny been talkin' things over, pardner. We seen you was too good to stay with this job. And the other day you said you was thinkin' of goin' back East. Don't want to scare you—but do you know what goin' back there would mean? But mebby you've heard 'em play that tune, slow and mournfullike? Anyhow, we ain't hooked up to pay you reg'lar wages, so we says mebby you'd like to get a job ridin' the trails doin' fire-patrol work this summer. I know Simpson. He's a good boss. I worked for him a spell, oncet. I reckon he'd give you a job if you was to ask for it."

Billy modestly declared himself incapable of holding such a job. Jimmy Gale outlined the work, which would entail vigilance rather than labor. "And a man that knows plumb nothin' about the game is a mighty sight easier to teach that some fella livin' right clost to the hills. He's got ideas—and ideas

is hard to change. You ain't got none. When you do get 'em they'll be the ideas of the service, and not yours. How do you feel about it?"

"If you think I could hold down a fire-patrol job, I'm willing to try."

Jimmy scratched his head. "Say, Billy, mebby my buttin' in right now sounds kind of hard-bitted, like we thought we had a rope on you. We ain't. You don't owe us nothin'. Seein' you shapin' up to where you can 'go good,' like Benny says, is big pay for anything we done."

Billy took up his hoe and strode to the end of the bean row. He bit his lip and blinked. He hoed savagely.

Jimmy grinned as he turned and sauntered back to the cabin.

"He's cured!" he asserted.

Benito, folding a tortilla, glanced up.

"Who cure? Those Ponto where he get them wire-cut on the fence?"

"Ponto nothin'! Don't you never think of anybody but them burros? I was meanin' Billy."

"He say he goin' to work that ranger job, yes?"

"You bet! And he's mad, plumb through. I don' know why. Mebby I kinda stirred him up, bein' no hand to bust eggs with a pillar."

"You make talk that he get mad?" queried Benito solicitously. Benito was fond of Billy.

Jimmy's blue eyes twinkled. "I sure did! I told him that we was tired of havin' him loaf around here and that if he didn't pay his board we was goin' to sue him and collect on his animals and outfit. I told him that I'd 'a' never took him in, nohow, only you was soft in your head about sick folks and animules, and that you done it without consultin' me. I said I couldn't tell if he was a real man or not when he was sick, but now that he was all right, I seen he was no man at all. I just finished up by callin' him a grub snatcher, and a bench warmer, and loafin' lizard, and a knock-kneed, narra-chested, flop-eared lunger, and——"

Benito calmly folded the enchilada and tucked it in the pan. He put the pan in the oven and closed the door. His movements were quiet, deliberate, businesslike.

"What he say to you that make you feel like so much talk?"

Jimmy grinned. "He didn't get a chanct to say. I did the talkin'."

Benito gazed pointedly at Jimmy's red head. "It is good that he get the job of fire look, only he get fool some time when you ride those trail."

"Oh, all *right!* Next time you can do the talkin'."

"I make to cook on them stove. I do not fry the egg in my sombrero, no?"

Jimmy's retort was interrupted by the appearance of Billy. "Gee! It's hot in here!" he exclaimed.

"I been insulted!" asserted Jimmy, trying to appear displeased, but with no great success.

Many time since that day, Billy Burton had camped on Chilao, where the old gray drifted from clump to clump of grass and the burro followed, his bell tinkling in the dusk as Billy made a fire and prepared supper. There were many other peaks in the course of Billy's patrol; great, wooded peaks, silent and austere; peaks from which he could see the distant blue of the Pacific and the misty ridges of Catalina, but Chilao was his favorite camping place.

He thought of building a cabin there, of fencing the grass, of plowing the flat along the stream and making a garden, not realizing that the meadow of green-and-gold in the summer sun was often blanketed with two or three feet of snow in January: that while the lower ranges and valleys were swept with alternate rain and sunshine, the trail across Chilao's winter height was locked for days at a time in the rigid grip of desolate white silence.

Billy's work as fire patrol kept him so busy that he seldom saw Benito or Jimmy, save when they met him in town, by chance, or when one or the other of them drifted back into the hills, meeting him apparently by accident. Billy did not know that Jimmy and Benito had memorized his schedule and could tell where he was camping or riding without even consulting the map.

That summer, as he rode the trails, Billy learned two things most essential to travel in the high country: that haste invited disaster and that worry was a commodity for which he had no room in his pack. From those four-legged philosophers, Sam and Rip, he acquired much wisdom. Some times night overtook him where no grazing offered, especially in his earlier experiences, for he was new at the game and made the usual mistake of approximating a journey by miles

rather than by hours. On such occasions Sam would nose about to assure himself that there was really no grass to be found. Then he would come and stand near the fire, his eyes half closed and his head lowered. But Rip never went hungry. He would eat scraps from camp—a piece of biscuit, a bacon-rind, even the label from a tin can. Then he would stray off to fill himself up with pine needles, shreds of bark, sage, or greasewood browse, when nothing better was to be had. Billy wakened sometimes to find Sam and Rip standing on either side of his bed roll, patiently waiting for morning.

At first their seeming dejection worried Billy, but he soon learned that they carried a reserve of steam not indicated in the gauge. They knew how to rest and make the most of a poor camp. And Billy noticed that they wasted no effort in their work, taking advantage of every legitimate opportunity to catch a minute's rest, snatching at bunch grass as they plodded along, drinking a little as they crossed each stream and attending to their work as a matter of course. They were Billy's only companions in the high country, and he grew more fond of them each day. Sam and Rip did good teamwork, yet each had his individual way of meeting an emergency. Once, as they jogged down a steep pitch where the trail was edged with buckthorn and manzanita, Rip suddenly took to the brush, circling several yards of open trail without apparent reason. Sam, to the contrary, stopped short and in spite of Bill's urging would not budge. Even the spurs, used infrequently until then, failed to stir him. He braced his forelegs and refused to move an inch. Billy dismounted to see what was wrong. As he stepped forward, a sinister buzzing chilled him from head to foot. He glanced along the trail and saw that which had stampeded Rip and stopped Sam. It was Billy's first experience with a rattlesnake: and even after he had shattered it with a club much longer than necessary, he wondered that such a thing should be a part of creation, with the fragrant buckthorn bloom above him and the delicate, vivid red flower of the Indian paint brush marking the spot where the snake had lain coiled and coldly belligerent.

Yet all of this was good for Billy—the companionship of the animals, his subconscious study of their habits, and even the occasional keen shock of finding a rattler on the trail. He forgot to think of himself, and in the forgetting he was able to overcome fatigue that otherwise would have been too much for him. Slowly his mind cleared of the complexities of existence. He learned to think quickly, and coolly; to travel judiciously, and to rest without making a ceremony of it.

Late that summer Jimmy Gale told Benito that the hills had made a new man of Billy Burton.

"He same hombre," said the ever-practical Benito. "The good breathe she jus' give him the chance to go good like he don' be sick."

"Oh, have it your own way!" laughed Jimmy.

"How Billy make to be new mans if he never old mans?" queried Benito.

Jimmy shook his head. There were times when Benito's argument was too literal, even for Jimmy.

As Billy grew stronger he grew ambitious to make a home on Chilao. He knew he could never make more than a bare living there. It would cost much money and labor to fence the flat, and he had his patrol duties to attend to. Yet he planned and dreamed—ever alert for the smoky hint of a fire in some cañon or on some distant range. And summer slowly rounded into fall. The grass withered along the water courses. The bloom faded and fell. Streams grew shallow; the mud-stained, hungry emptiness of their courses seemed to cry for rain. The deer drifted toward the higher country where the grass was still heavy in the mountain meadows.

Then, one day, Billy was told that his patrol duty was over. The service was short of funds. The danger of fire was growing less as winter approached. The supervisor told him that he could have the same job next season, but that there was no work for him just then. It came to Billy as a shock, although he knew the fire-patrol work ceased with the approach of the rainy season. He had received fifty dollars a month and he had saved all but fifty dollars that he had spent for provisions. The day after he was discharged he rode up the cañon trail and down to Benito's cabin. Benito was there. Jimmy had gone to town.

"You finish them job?" queried Benito as he shook hands. "You don' get those work on the trail, no?"

"Yes, I'm through, for this season."

"How you feel? You go good?"

"You bet! How are you, and how are the burros?"

Benito chuckled. "Them burro eat all time. Sometime he sing, muy dulce, yes? Them burro he need work. Too fat, I think."

"How's Jimmy?"

"Oh, the Señor Jim he go to town to see them picture move. He get tire of this place sometime. Then he see them picture move, and he come back and say to me, 'Gosh! Them picture make me tire where I sit down. I come back to get rest up where the breathe she is good.' "

"I can understand that. Say, Benito, I want to settle for my board, last summer. And for the pasture for Sam and Rip."

"You got that board, yes? And those horse and burro he got them pasture, eh?"

"Sure! But——"

"Then what you want?"

"See here, Benny, you can't dodge it that way. I want to pay for my board and the pasturage."

"So? That all pay long time. The Señor Jim he say 'Doing nothing!' if you say that."

"When is Jimmy coming back?"

Benito shrugged his shoulders. "Quién sabe? When he go he say he come home when he get back. He make the joke all time. He say to me I must worry—but I don' do like that. You have the hungry? I fix him!"

"No, thanks. But if Sam and Rip could eat a little——"

"I fix him! You pretty strong mans now, eh?"

"You bet! Say, Benito, you know that flat up on Chilao: lots of feed for stock and water and good soil and plenty of wood—well, I think I'll homestead that piece of land."

"Si? But it take pretty strong mans for that job. The winter she make the snow, like this——" Benito illustrated, his hand some three feet from the ground. "She muy frio sometime."

"Snow! Up there? Honest? Why it's a paradise now."

Benito nodded. "I know them country. Sometime I lose them burro. I look for the track and find him stand in the snow like he goin' die. Santa Maria! But it is the hard work to get him where he go good."

"I didn't know that. But I could build a stable and corral and cut some feed for winter. The bunch grass is heavy up there."

"Si! But it take the long time for do all them thing. Two mans they make him, yes? But one mans he don' make him go. I think it is good that you stay here—where the sun she is go all the time and the snow she get scare and don' come in."

"That would be fine, but I can't. And it isn't just the homestead, either. I've been thinking about fellows like myself, who come out to this country hoping they are going to get well. They usually stay in some town and spend all their money for board, if they can get somebody to take them in. And they usually stay where it's hot, like I did at first—and they drift into a kind of don't care condition until—— And this climate is kind to them and lets them down easy. But up there in the hills! Why the air up there makes a fellow feel like a two-year-old! It's great, right here; but I miss the smell of the pines in the sun and that little wind from the desert with a kind of half-warm half-cold edge to it, like the fall back East. That's the medicine! I'm going to make a camp up there, or bust."

"Then you make the bust, all right. She too big job for one mans."

"Well, if you don't mind, I'll wait till Jimmy gets back. I want to talk with him about it. Where's the ax?"

"You goin' put them horse and burro in the corral?"

"By golly! I actually forgot Sam and Rip. But then, they're not lungers—and I was thinking of lungers."

Billy had his sleeves rolled up and was chopping wood at a rate that amused Benito. Out in the pasture Sam and Rip renewed acquaintance with Benito's burros—a formality that could not be overlooked, for there are social customs among the animals quite as imperative as those among men, and often observed with far more nicety. Ponto, Benito's big black burro, greeted Sam with a double-barreled welcome that sounded hearty and genuine. Sam whirled and returned the compliment. Seemingly satisfied, they then set about the serious business of life, which was to eat all they could. Meanwhile, Benito's other burros hazed Rip round the pasture, not hurriedly, but persistently, until Rip showed that he was able to take a joke by engaging in a kick-

ing match with the two that terminated in all three grazing together amicably. The kick seems to be a sort of equine handshake among horses and mules and burros, a sort of friendly emphasis of pleasure in the meeting, and possibly a test of the recipient's ability to take a joke, while the kickee in turn receives acknowledgment in kind, and without umbrage.

Billy observed these social maneuvers with some trepidation, but Benito assured him that it was simply a friendly rehabilitation of a former understanding.

Meanwhile Jimmy Gale had seen several "pictures move" and was on his way to the cabin, arriving late in the evening. Billy said nothing about his plans just then, but talked about the summer's work with much enthusiasm. That night he dreamed of a camp on Chilao where stood a big log cabin and about it, among the trees, many tent houses. There was a long table, outdoors, a stable and corral—a complete camp capable of housing many invalids. When, in his dream, he came to search for his money, he invariably found in its stead a book of the rules on forestry.

Next morning he had a long talk with Jimmy. Jimmy listened patiently, occasionally shaking his head. Finally he seemed to drift into a reverie as Billy spoke of establishing his mountain sanctuary. Billy was a bit disappointed. He thought that Jimmy was indifferent to the plan. Jimmy was anything but indifferent, but he did not wish to encourage Billy too much in the beginning, thinking that the latter did not realize what a severe task lay before him to even homestead the land. They had settled the question of board and lodging. Jimmy had hesitatingly accepted fifty dollars, after Billy had stated that they would have to either accept it personally, or he would deposit it to Jimmy's credit in the bank.

"I been wonderin' what we was goin' to do," said Jimmy, following a lapse in the conversation, "ever since me and Benny made our strike. Once I thought if I had money I'd sure have a good time. But you got to be eddicated to spend money, to have a good time. Now me and Benny is rich"—they had something like four thousand dollars in the bank—"and we ain't worked much because we don't have to. And we ain't got the nerve to spend the money. Least, I ain't. Benny, he don't care, either way. It's plumb disgustin' to be in a fix like that. Now I'll go along up to Chilao with you and help you string some fence and put up a shack before snow comes. And by then I reckon you'll be willin' to come down here and board with us till the sun melts down the snow on the peaks. I ain't got no homestead right, havin' used mine over in the Antelope country. But you got one. What do you say if me and Benny go shares with you—you take out the papers and when you prove up you can deed half of your Hobo's Heaven to us?"

"Do you mean it?"

"I ain't joshin'. Homesteadin' ain't a joshin' matter."

"Well, that's mighty fine of you, Jimmy! And when we get things going we can advertise in the Eastern papers. We ought to get plenty of applications."

"Oh, you'll get 'em all right. 'Course, you know it takes about three years and some cash extra to prove up on a homestead. And you'll have to have a cook and a helper, and lots of the right kind of grub for sick folks, and a doctor to spoon it out to 'em, and a string of burros to pack stuff in, and a couple more saddle ponies, and you got to chop plenty wood, for it sure gets edgy up there nights. Then you got to cut grass for winter feed, and set up them tents you was talkin' about, and buy beddin' and cots and stoves and washbasins and pitchers and lookin'-glasses and dishes and knives and forks and cookin' pots and such. And you'll need a plow and team and mebby a light wagon to haul stuff around the ranch, and a harrow and axes and shovels and a bar and a post maul—and how much money you say you got left from your wages?"

Billy winced, but he smiled as Jimmy grinned at him. "I have just two hundred dollars."

"And about ten thousand dollars' worth of ideas," said Jimmy.

"A fool idea," said Billy. "But there is nothing to hinder me from filing my application to homestead that land, is there?"

"Just let me talk to Benny a minute." And Jimmy sauntered over to the cabin.

Billy never knew just what Jimmy said to Benito; but later in the day Jimmy shaved, and, donning town clothes, invited Billy to accompany him to the land office. They rode to the town of Chilao and took the train for Los Angeles. Next day they went

to the land office, and later, to see a "picture move." In two weeks they had secured descriptions, witnesses, and had monumented the corners of the homestead claim.

Following this they held a long discussion in the cabin. Benito hazed his burros to town and returned with supplies and tools.

Even old Sam was called into service as a pack animal that unforgettable fall morning when Benito strung the burros out along the cañon trail and the little cavalcade of adventurers toiled up the switchbacks toward the ridge. Benito hummed a song. Jimmy was rather silent. Billy was all enthusiasm. He was going to build a home with his own hands—possibly aided and abetted by Benito and Jimmy—in the country he loved, the country that had healed him.

And the two, Benny Benito, the Lion of the Mountains, and Jimmy Gale—either of whom could have shaken Billy out of his boots with one hand—followed Billy's enthusiasm even to the peak of Chilao, followed a vague ideal, vague, yet so potent that it thrust aside all logic and experience. Incidentally, Jimmy had told Benito that he would see their comrade through if it took the last cent in the outfit. Benito had smiled slowly.

"I make the bet that you have the good feel in your heart for them sick hombre, yes?"

"Sick nothin'! Do you think I'm gettin' soft in my head? I been workin' so dinged hard this summer foolin' myself that I was goin' to work at somethin', that I need a rest. This is her. This here is my vacation."

CHAPTER III.

The mountain flat immediately round the new cabin was cleared of fallen limbs and logs. The pine cones were heaped in a huge pile near the cabin. About ten acres had been fenced—ten acres of meadow dotted with clumps of bunch grass, and shadowed by the great pines that stood far apart in dignified isolation. Backed against a low ridge on the west, the cabin fitted into its surroundings unobtrusively, save for the newness of the timbers, peeled of bark, at Jimmy's suggestion.

"Bark," Jimmy explained, "was just a natural hang-out for bugs and suchlike."

Near the cabin stood the lean-to stable and pole corral. Through one corner of the corral meandered a narrow stream. Back in the timber lay fallen trees that would make excellent firewood. The fence circled the meadow in an irregular fashion, its outline obviously dependent upon the trees most adaptable for fence posts. Beyond the inclosure ran a lean line of naked posts, set and ready for wire. These posts marked the eastern boundary of the homestead.

The cabin chimney was of stone laid in cement that Benito had packed in on the burros. The fireplace, which had been one of Billy's greater enthusiasms, was neither too large to engulf all the heat, nor too small to accommodate a fair-sized log. The cabin was partitioned off into three rooms, an ample living room, a bedroom, and the kitchen which opened to the corral—a convenient arrangement for feeding the animals when the snows came. The partitions were of heavy canvas braced with light poles from floor to roof. The roof was of split cedar shakes. The small amount of lumber packed in had been used for window frames, doors, and flooring. Billy had realized that he must forgo many things he had planned. He had suggested a drinking trough for the stock. Jimmy had pointed to the stream in the corral. Billy had suggested building mangers in the lean-to stable. Jimmy had mildly intimated that nose bags were less expensive and more portable. When Billy spoke of buying a table and chairs, Jimmy said nothing, but several days later he astonished Billy by demonstrating with ax and saw and a few nails, that canned-goods boxes and rough-hewn saplings could be made to serve as chairs, tables, and handy shelves and cupboards.

Jimmy had never worked more painstakingly in his life, nor had he ever enjoyed himself more. Billy's sincere enthusiasm, his surprise and delight as the work progressed swiftly, more than repaid Jimmy for his labor. And Jimmy, who never betrayed much enthusiasm for anything, no matter how he felt, had to admit that the endeavor had been a success and that he had but one favor to ask; that his name might go down to posterity as the architect of Billy's mountain hermitage.

"Carve your name and the date right on that log above the door," said Billy.

Jimmy faced off the log and carved, one day, when Billy and Benito had hazed the burros down to town for supplies. When

Billy returned, an interesting legend confronted him, carved everlastingly in the log:

J. GALE, ARKITECHT,
November, 1915.

Benito had attended to most of the packing, and he had brushed out a short-cut trail from the meadow to the ridge above his cabin. Incidentally, he had furnished meat, the flavor of which was new to Billy.

As December threatened rain, all three set to cutting bunch grass laboriously, that Sam and Rip might not go hungry when the snows came. This, with sacked barley, would tide them over the short winter season, for the snows never lay long on Chilao, but accumulated and melted, furnishing natural irrigation for the meadow pasture.

About the middle of December Billy found himself established, nearly all his money spent, his cabin stocked with provisions, and in debt to Jimmy and Benito to an extent that he disliked to realize when he had estimated the value of their labor at even the minimum wage. When he talked of paying them they laughed and told him they would take it out in board, later. Jimmy suggested facetiously that his own lungs might need patching up, most any time; that he had noticed a hollow feeling in the region of his chest. Benito chuckled.

"You get that feel three time, every day. You awful sick mans when you hungry. Me, I don' have the sick long's I'm livin'—but some time it is that I get sick I come here and you make me go good, yes?"

One morning, when the wind blew chill through the pines and the heavy clouds spilled wind-whipped gusts of rain, Billy rode with his two friends to the edge of the meadow and watched them depart, Jimmy astride of Skyrocket and Benito trudging patiently behind with the burros. Back in the corral Rip pumped up a melancholy series of farewells to the departed burros, while Sam stood with his head over the bars watching the trail down which they had disappeared.

Billy sighed and turned back to his home. The wind whistled across the meadow and a peculiar half-light flickered among the trees. Billy strode past the corral and entered the cabin. It smelled fresh and clean; fragrant with the tang of the pines and the faint hint of imprisoned sunshine. He laid a short log in the fireplace and watched the tiny globules of gum ooze out as the flames wrapped round it. Presently a heavy gust of wind smote the cabin and a puff of smoke shot out into the room. Billy rubbed his eyes and, turning, strode to the bedroom to get a book. Across the blankets of his bunk lay a new canvas short coat, a "sourdough," waterproof, and lined with heavy sheepskin. He examined it and laid it back on the bed. Back in the living room he pulled a chair to the fireplace and made himself comfortable. He had forgotten the book in thinking of Jimmy and Benito. His watch, which he had hung over the fireplace in lieu of a clock, ticked insistently. He glanced at it.

"They'll be down in the North Fork, about now. Darn 'em!" And again he thought of the new coat, obviously a present from them; a good, stout coat, rough, strong, serviceable, and with no pretense to style. "Just like Benny and Jim," he murmured, and he felt his throat tighten.

Billy had been much by himself, on the trails, in the sunshine and the open, with a new vista at each turn of the trail, the interest of watching Sam and Rip, and of going somewhere. He had not felt lonely then. But now, comfortably housed, with food and firewood, a few books, his pipe, which he had begun to smoke again, in the evenings, and with his dream slowly maturing—the dream of a sanctuary for those afflicted as he had been—he was lonely beyond words. Not until then did he actually realize how much the companionship of Benito and Jimmy had meant to him. He had lived so intensely in the making of his home that he had had no time to think of himself. The inevitable reaction had set in. His enthusiasm, realizing an ideal, had stagnated. The cabin seemed raw and desolate. The meadow, whispering in the north wind, was sinister and drear. Billy thought of saddling up and riding to town. But he had no pretext that would stand on its own feet. He felt that to give way to this inclination would be disloyal to himself, the homestead, and to his friends.

He glanced out and saw Sam and Rip contentedly munching their feed in the lean-to stable, sheltered from the wind. Suddenly he brightened.

"I know what's wrong. Never thought of it till now. I want a dog—any kind of a dog—to talk to. And by Gemini, I'm going to town to-morrow and get one!"

He fetched the book from the bedroom

and settled himself before the fireplace. A heavy wind droned through the pines. Absorbed in memorizing the rules of the forest service, Billy did not see the slanting rain slowly change to sleet, and then, stealthily, to broad flakes of early snow. The fire died down. He rose to replenish it, glancing through the window as he did so. The meadow was a haze of dancing white flakes. Billy almost ran to the door and flung it wide. The vista seemed unreal, mysterious in the sudden change. The vague outline of the trees, the incessant sifting of the floating flakes, a different edge to the air, and the silence of the woodlands—a soft silence, quite different from the silence of the summer hills—struck straight to his imagination. He felt as though he had been transported to a mystery, a dream, a land beyond the very outlands themselves. He acknowledged his physical self with a start. Coming from the fireplace to the outdoors he had invited the winter chill that crept up his sleeves and down his neck. He returned to the fireplace and read on, past noon, until the fading light forced him to close his book.

After supper he lighted one of the lanterns —he had not yet purchased the hanging lamp that he wanted—and resumed his task of memorizing rules. About eight o'clock he was startled by an unusual sound near the doorway. He told himself that it was the wind. But again he heard the sound, a whining and scratching, a sniffing—and then silence. He laughed at himself for hesitating. Striding to the door, he flung it open. A fine, scattering snow swirled in. He blinked in the semidarkness. "Imagination, of course!" He shrugged his shoulders and returned to his reading. But now he was alert, listening and wondering. Could it be a mountain lion, or a bobcat. There were lions in the hills. He had seen their tracks on the trail many times. And once he had caught a glimpse of a tawny shape plunging down a steep hillside just as he had rounded a bend. The tracks across the trail had been large tracks, and even the philosophic Sam had been uneasy.

Billy did not hunt. He disliked to think of killing any living thing—yet he did not like to be hunted. If the thing out there whined or sniffed again, he would investigate, not because he wanted to kill the animal, but because he wanted to know what was prowling round the cabin.

He tiptoed to the bedroom and got his six-shooter, which he packed to kill rattlesnakes with. He laid the gun on the table and took up his book, forcing himself to read in spite of his imaginings.

But this time there was no mistake about it. Something had scratched at the door, and that something had whined. Billy rose, stepping softly, and opened the door a few inches. Something cringed on the ground just beyond the light, a something that whined and crept along, turning its head to glare at him. Billy raised the gun. Then he lowered it and laughed.

"Come on in, pup! I don't know who you are, but you came to the right place. How in—in Chilao did you get here?"

The shivering, cringing little dog was not to be taken in so easily. He had had experiences with men that had not inclined to make him an optimist. For two years he had fought his battle with the world, a hard world, a puzzling world. A few persons had been kind to him, at first, petting him and feeding him because he was a stray. Later, other persons had been brutal, kicking at him and chasing him away, because he was a stray. Naturally he did not understand men, and was suspicious of any voice that cajoled him into approaching. A man had once coaxed him up, only to seize him and chuck him into the town water trough, a joke that greatly amused the store-front loafers. The dog had not forgotten that. Finally he had given up trying to exist in town and had taken to the brush, where he hunted ground squirrels and rabbits. Occasionally he had returned to town in the night and made away with a chicken. He was an outlaw, a sturdy, short-legged outlaw, not overquick but exceedingly patient. There was much of the bulldog in his cosmos. His head was round and smooth, his little eyes slanting and pink-rimmed, his chest broad, his jaw heavy, and his forelegs short and muscular. Back of his forelegs he was just dog, with no pretense to definite ancestry.

Hunting in the brush, he had trailed burro tracks up to Chilao, where he had lain out in the evening forest watching the light in the cabin window an hour or more before he ventured to explore the premises. Curious to find out what it all meant—this new cabin and corral, the fence and the wood pile, the stack of bunch grass lashed down with a tarp, the lean-to stable—he had

crept out from the brush. Habitations often meant chickens. First he explored the vicinity of the stable. A horse and a burro! Well, *they* were all right! But there were man tracks about. Hungry and cold, and finding no chicken, he sniffed Billy's tracks from the cabin to the stream and back. There was light and warmth in there. He had sniffed along the crack of the door, until assured that some one was in the place. The dog in him was cautious, but the puppy in him whined because of the cold and his hunger.

"Come on in!" said Billy. "It's all right, old man."

The dog understood, but he distrusted Billy. That room in there with the fire snapping and the light dancing on the windowpanes might be a trap. There might even be a water trough in there.

Billy beckoned to the dog, who jumped back, whining and growling, half-afraid, half-assured that this man animal was friendly.

"We'll both freeze if you don't come in," said Billy, and without paying further attention to the dog, he walked to the fireplace, leaving the door open. The dog crept up to the doorway, his little slant eyes blinking, his muscles rigid—ready to turn and run on the instant. Billy sat down and picked up his book. The dog became curious. He drew himself up on the doorsill, his foreleg crooked tentatively, his flanks quivering with excitement. He moved forward stealthily, as he moved when hunting game, alert, questioning. A gust of wind swept in and fluttered the ashes in the fireplace. The dog jumped back growling. Billy smiled as he conned Rule 5——

"Don't build bonfires in windy weather, or where there is the slightest danger of their escaping from control——"

He shivered. The cabin was chilling rapidly.

"The poor little tike knows I'm pretending, and he is afraid. I'll just act natural," and following the thought, Billy reached in his pocket for matches, lighted his pipe, settled himself in his chair and turned a page of the Rules. His right arm relaxed and hung down. The dog's alert eyes were fixed on Billy's hand. He crept up carefully, experimentally, and sniffed. Billy started as that cold nose touched his fingers. He turned and glanced down. The dog backed away ready for flight, yet almost willing to risk making friends. Billy checked himself in the act of speaking. The little dog glared up at him, half-defiantly, half-questioningly, with such ludicrous puppy impudence in his attitude that Billy laughed—a hearty, natural laugh. The dog's stub tail moved from side to side, not vigorously, yet expressive of a willingness to proceed further toward an armistice. Billy rose and, stepping to the door, made as though to close it. The little animal was outside in a flash.

"It's up to you, stranger!" laughed Billy.

For a minute he stood looking down at the tike, who shivered and whined as he blinked up at Billy. Then summoning all his courage, fighting an almost overwhelming temptation to run, the dog darted back into the room. Billy closed the door, laid some wood on the fire, and settled himself to read. The dog, standing in the middle of the room, watched him, his head cocked inquisitively. As Billy paid no attention whatever, the dog began to explore the cabin, his belly close to the floor as he poked into each corner, smelt of this and that, investigated a pile of packsaddles and saddlery, nosed along the crack of the door, pattered into the bedroom, trotted out and across to the kitchen, and finally returned to the middle of the living room where he stood watching this man-thing that seemed to be entirely indifferent to his presence. Finally, assured that this man-thing had no ulterior motive in inviting him in, the dog relaxed a little. Billy glanced down to see the slanting eyes gazing up at him with a most peculiar expression, as though the little animal were trying to tell him that he was willing to play the game, fifty-fifty, but that it would altogether depend upon him, as to their future relations toward each other. Billy closed his book, and, taking pains not to make any abrupt movement, he patted his knee invitingly. The dog hesitated, put up one foot, then the other, and slowly drew himself up, trembling a little, yet not altogether with fear. It was a new and wonderful experience to feel confidence in a man.

And it was the bulldog in this sturdy little outlaw that had triumphed, overcoming the timidity inherited through experience and a mixed ancestry. He had at last chosen a master whom he was willing to trust in spite of erstwhile abuse and discouragement. Perhaps in his dog heart he

realized that this man-thing was also hungry for companionship. Perhaps his instinct told him that here was a good home. But more likely, he hungered for a master, one whom he could serve, follow, obey, with that splendid loyalty which knows no change through good or evil days, hunger and hardship, storm or sunshine, even to the end.

Billy stroked the smooth, round head. The dog hunched himself and settled down with a huge sigh of relief and content. Billy noticed that in spite of his sturdy build the dog's belly was tucked up—that his ribs were close to the skin.

"By Gosh! Perhaps he's hungry. Are you hungry, pup?"

The dog blinked up at him, not quite understanding the question. It had been a long time since any one had offered him food.

"Hungry?"

The dog raised himself on his forelegs and yawned prodigiously.

"Great Scott! What a cave!"

The dog's healthy, pink tongue curled, and the strong, white teeth closed down like the offset jaws of a trap.

"Well, if your anteroom is any indication of your interior, it needs decorating. Come on! We'll see what we can do."

The dog hopped down as Billy rose. In the kitchen Billy gave him a chunk of jerky and turned to search for some cold biscuit. In that brief interval the jerky disappeared.

"Where's the meat?" exclaimed Billy.

The little, pink-rimmed eyes had no answer, but a subterranean gurgling and a sort of gentle rippling of the dog's sides seemed to indicate that the meat had been taken care of. Meanwhile, the slant eyes plainly asked for more.

"Meat is precious up here, pup. Try a biscuit."

The dog caught the biscuit before it touched the floor. He gulped and licked his chops.

"Moses! What did you do with it?"

The little dog grinned and moved his tail stump slightly.

"Well," and Billy tossed another biscuit, "you're not a lunger—that's certain. You'd make a dandy outfielder if baseballs were biscuits. Another one gone! Just like chucking apples into a barrel. Say, Chuck, just stand still and hold your mouth open. It'll save time."

But even "Chuck," as Billy called him, had his limitations. He caught the last biscuit on the fly. It disappeared. Then he leaped to the bench and began to drink from the water pail.

"Here, little stranger, that's private stock! But, thunder, you've gone and done it!"

Chuck drank and drank. His sides swelled visibly. Finally he hopped down, sneezed, rubbed his eyes with his paw, and trotted into the living room where he appropriated Billy's chair, squirming round and round until satisfied with his bed. Billy did not have the heart to order him down. The pup had made himself at home, taken his new master's good will for granted, and even before Billy had pulled a bench to the fireplace, the little animal, full fed and weary from tramping the hills, was snoring.

Chuck slept at the foot of Billy's bunk that night, disdaining the saddle blankets spread for him in the corner of the bedroom.

Billy wakened to find an inch of snow on the ground. The air was keen. As he stepped from the cabin he saw tracks in the light snow, big, round tracks that Chuck investigated, bristling and growling. Evidently a mountain lion had trailed Chuck to the cabin.

"If he'd got hold of you, pup, he would have taken you in just like you take in a biscuit."

Chuck bristled and growled. He knew what those tracks meant.

Billy was gathering an armful of wood, about an hour later, when he suddenly realized that Chuck had disappeared. After putting the wood in the cabin Billy set out to track the dog. Chuck had obviously followed the lion tracks into the timber. Billy turned and came back to the woodpile, where he busied himself packing in firewood until noon. He was stooping over the woodpile when he heard a pattering behind him. He jumped round. Chuck volleyed up, out of breath, evidently excited, and unmistakably eager to coax his master into the timber. When Chuck realized that Billy was not interested in tracking lions, he gave up coaxing and padded to the cabin and into the kitchen, where he sniffed the fresh-piled wood, bristling and growling as though it concealed some enemy. But that was simply make-believe. His hunting fever was giving way to hunger; and when Billy came in, Chuck's change of attitude was expressive of his willingness to play the milder game of catching biscuits on the fly.

Billy had thought of going to town to get a dog. A dog had come to him out of the winter night, an accident of coincidence seemingly strange, almost uncanny, yet if Billy could have followed the dog's meanderings the day before, he would have realized that Chuck had simply blundered onto the camp in the course of his ordinary adventuring. Yet Billy still wanted to go to town. He now had no reason to make the trip; hardly an excuse. But after breakfast he saddled up and took the short-cut trail, Chuck running ahead or trailing behind as his nose dictated. He seemed made of muscle, energy, and inquisitiveness.

On the ridge overlooking Benito's cabin in the cañon, Billy reined up, tempted to ride down and visit with his friends. But he would be confessing to loneliness if he did so. And he really had to go to town. Chuck needed a collar. That was it! So Billy excused himself as he rode along the ridge trail toward the desert. Once, when he had reined up and glanced back, he saw Chuck dash wildly round the bend in the trail and then stop suddenly as he saw the horse and rider.

Chuck's little slant eyes were gleaming. "This is the life!" fairly radiated from every inch of him.

CHAPTER IV.

It was said in the town of Chilao that Ranger Burton was building a sanatorium for "lungers" up in the Chilao meadows; that his Eastern relatives were wealthy; that he had paid Benny Benito and Jimmy Gale top wages for their services; that he was a physician himself who had been slightly touched by the disease. All sorts of rumors were afloat on the bucolic tide of that small town's gossip. Jimmy Gale, who was responsible for much of this, rather enjoyed the bewilderment of the townsfolk, and he let no opportunity pass to add to it. Jimmy considered his outland innuendos good advertising for Billy. And because Benny Benito, when questioned by the townsfolk, had intimated that Billy was simply homesteading, the good citizens of Chilao *knew* that Benito was lying. Mexicans, they averred, had rather lie than tell the truth, any day!

So it happened that when Billy rode into town that December noon the storekeeper was almost obsequious in his attentions. A sanatorium meant trade, and Ward wanted the business. Ward was also postmaster. He had scanned the long official envelopes addressed to Burton. They were potently suggestive. Billy hardly appreciated Ward's many hints anent future dealings in groceries and provisions, attributing Ward's change of manner to personal friendliness rather than to professional policy.

"Hear you're about ready to do business," said Ward as Billy asked for his mail.

"Oh, I'm in pretty good shape for the winter. I may need a few things later on."

This sounded modest to the storekeeper, and quite in keeping with Burton's position as manager of a sanatorium.

"Lungers is scarce this year," asserted Ward as though condoling with Billy on this scarcity.

"I'm glad of that!" stated Billy soulfully.

Ward was puzzled. Evidently Burton was sincere—and "lungers" meant business. "Well," drawled Ward, "if I ketch any I'll send 'em up to you—charges collect." And this genial dispenser of second-rate groceries grinned.

Billy said nothing just then. He did not like Ward's manner. Ward interpreted this silence as a sort of professional indifference, intended to impress the layman. Billy examined the dusty price tags on some cheap dog collars, wondering, as he thought of his scant funds, if a plain leather strap with a stout buckle would not do for Chuck. Unaware of the gossip that had invested him with the management of a sanatorium, wealth, and the degree of M. D.—Jimmy had taken to calling Billy "Doc," when speaking of him to the townsfolk—Billy bought a plain collar for fifty cents, tarried a few minutes, and then departed.

Chuck, who had declined to enter the town in spite of Billy's coaxing, was waiting up the arroyo, standing in the trail and looking earnestly toward the town. He danced about and growled playfully when Billy rode up. But Chuck did not bark. It occurred to Billy that Chuck never barked, even when excited, even as he was now, jumping and snapping at Sam's nose and cavorting about the brush in a wild endeavor to express his joy at Billy's return. Billy dismounted and buckled the collar round Chuck's short neck. Chuck immediately lay down and tried to paw the collar off. Billy laughed.

"It's your badge of servitude. You'll get used to it. We all do."

And as Billy rode up the arroyo in the afternoon sunlight, still a bit lonesome, and still wondering why he had ridden to town, it slowly dawned on him that he had been rather careless in not correcting Ward's intimation that the cabin on Chilao was ready to receive patients.

"But he couldn't have meant it," Billy said to himself. "He ought to know that I'm not in shape to take care of any one, yet. Jimmy must have been telling about my plans for the future. Of course, some day——" and Billy drifted into a reverie from which he did not wholly awaken until he was on the ridge above Benito's cabin and saw the smoke curling up in the afternoon air. He longed to ride down and talk with his friends. But no, he would have to get used to being alone. He would spend his time studying the government pamphlets on forestry. Next season he would take the examination for ranger. The supervisor had told him that he could have his former place as fire patrol the coming summer. That would give him an opportunity to work into the service and earn his living at the same time. Everything would come out all right in the end.

As he neared the higher country where a thin edge of snow seemed to hesitate as though fearful of venturing farther down the mountainside, Billy reached back and untied his coat, the warm sheepskin-lined coat that Benito and Jimmy had given him. Chuck, tired of investigating the possibilities of the brush, trotted behind the pony, occasionally stopping to sniff some animal's track, but in a casual way. Chuck had covered many extra miles going to and from town and incidentally, he had surprised and devoured a brush rabbit. He felt that his day's work was about done.

The long, low rays of the evening sun glinted on the cabin windows as Billy rode down the trail through the meadows. The big pines, sprinkled with white, seemed to be waiting, watching, listening for something or some one. Billy shrugged his shoulders. It seemed ages since he had left the cabin. The place was silent, dreary, sinister.

Yet as he attended to the animals he realized that Chilao had not changed—that it was as beautiful as ever. He wondered if he had changed, if the solitudes were making him over into another being. His mood passed as Sam and Rip munched the bunch grass that he threw to them. They were real—and natural enough. And the pup—he was at the door, waiting to be let in. Billy paused with his hand on the latch.

"To-morrow is Christmas Day!" he exclaimed. "Perhaps that's why Ward was so pleasant—but he didn't say a word about Christmas." Billy had utterly forgotten the holiday in the work days on Chilao, in the level sequence of which Sunday itself held no special significance.

Patches of earth showed through the light snow as the morning sun filtered through the treetops. The ground steamed, and a haze of mist drifted through the woodlands. Billy fed the animals, had his own breakfast, and, after cleaning up about the cabin, he took his book to the doorway where he sat in the sunshine, reading and occasionally glancing out across the meadow. He wondered if Benny and Jimmy would surprise him by a Christmas visit. He was too new to the outlands of the West to know that Christmas Day was not observed with any special formality save in the settled communities, where there were children. Jimmy Gale, however, had remembered the day and had rather expectd that Billy would visit Benito's cabin. So it happened that neither household bestirred itself until noon, when Billy, tired of memorizing rules, rose and chucked his book on the table. He paced up and down the room, irritated because he was restless without apparent cause. Suddenly it occurred to him that possibly Jimmy and Benito expected him to make them a visit. He felt a bit disappointed that they had not arranged to celebrate the day at his cabin. But, perhaps, they had gone to town. He could find out, however, without much trouble. Taking his field glasses, he called to Chuck and strode down the meadow trail through the timber until he came to the short-cut which zigzagged down the mountain to the ridge above Benito's cabin. Chuck did not hunt that morning, but stuck close to Billy's heels, as though aware that his master was in a serious mood.

In a half hour Billy was standing on the ridge and gazing down at the half-concealed cabin below. Jimmy's horse was grazing in the pasture, and smoke was curling from the cabin chimney. Billy hesitated. Then, irritated by his hesitation, he asked himself what was the matter with himself? Was he ashamed or afraid to acknowledge by his presence at the cabin that he was lonely

and wished to spend Christmas with his friends? He realized that in his recent isolation he had been thinking too much about himself. The winter season had driven him, like a bear, into hibernation, and he was mentally sucking his own paws. He laughed as he thought of this. And his sense of humor recalled Badger Clark's:

Freezy was the day's ride, lengthy was the trail,
Every steer was haughty with a high-arched tail,
But we held 'em and we shoved 'em for our longin' hearts were tried
By a yearnin' for tobacker and our dear fireside.

Lively on the last turn, lope her to the death!—
Reddy's soul is willin' but he's gettin' short of breath—
Aye, the storm wind sings a plenty, and old trouble sucks his paw
When we have a hour of firelight set to "Turkey in the Straw."

Billy started down the cañon trail, determined to shake off his moodiness by a brisk hike; to leave it up there on the ridge like that last patch of snow melting in the sunshine.

When he arrived at the cabin he found Jimmy and Benito preparing dinner. Places were laid for three. And Billy felt a bit piqued that his presence seemed to have been taken for granted.

Benito had a message for him. Ward, the storekeeper, had sent word by a Mexican that morning that he wanted to see Billy at once.

"I was goin' up to get you," said Jimmy, grinning. "But we kind 'a' thought you might look in about dinner time. This here Mexican cookin' is a all-day job. We're doin' this in style, dinner at six, so we figured if you didn't come 'long about three, we'd ride up and git you. Wonder what Ward wants? You was down there yesterday, so Benito's friend says. Somethin' must of happened since."

"I can't imagine. And I can't imagine what started Ward calling me 'doc.' It may be a joke, but I don't like it. I wonder where he got that idea?"

"Search me!" And Jimmy glanced at Benito.

"Well, I'd like to know who started it. I'd like to talk to that chap!"

"No use gettin' sore about it, Billy. Folks are like to hang any old name onto you in this country. 'Course if you *are* sore, and find out who done it, you can sure bank on me to help you make that fella eat them words."

"You hungry, Jim?" Benito queried mildly, turning to Jimmy.

Jimmy grinned. "Me? Been hungry ever since breakfast. I et light account of this here dinner that's been cookin' three hours."

Billy was paying no attention to Jimmy's pleasantries. He was thinking of Ward's message, which, abrupt as it was, was significant of something more or less serious.

"I don't see how I can make it to town and back, this afternoon. I'm afoot. Wonder what Ward wants, anyway?"

"Dunno," said Jimmy. "But let that ride. To-day is Christmas—and we're goin' to eat, so Benny, here, says."

In spite of the fact that his friends were obviously glad to see him, the day, as a holiday, seemed to be a failure. Jimmy and Benito were as casual as ever. Christmas to them seemed to convey no special significance. And back East, Christmas Day had meant so much—hearty greetings, good wishes heartily expressed, laughter, fun, music, the making of and receiving of gifts and a kind of general looking forward to the new year and a promise of greater happiness.

"The conventional thing," thought Billy as he watched the deliberate Benito fussing about the stove, and the carelessly easy Jimmy astraddle of a chair, his arms crossed on the chair back and his chin on his arms, also watching Benito.

But after all, Christmas had always been an excuse to make merry, with the real significance of the commemoration vague, scarcely apparent. In fact, the day had been slowly losing its real significance, even within the recollection of Billy. The good, old-fashioned Christmas of his boyhood was no more! But no! People had changed. The day was ever the same for those who wished to observe it sincerely. And as he soliloquized, Ward's message came to him with annoying frequency. Nor did Billy dream that, awaiting him in the town of Chilao, was incontrovertible proof that Christmas Day could be made to mean all that its beneficent origin implied.

"When will dinner be ready?" queried Billy.

"Oh, she be good, four, five, mebby."

Billy turned to Jimmy Gale. "If you'll let me take Skyrocket, I'll ride to town. I can make it—and back, by six."

"Sure! But dinged if I wouldn't let Ward wait till to-morrow. What's the hurry."

"I don't know," said Billy, smiling. "Guess I'm restless."

"You ain't feelin' sick?" queried Jimmy.

"Never felt better. Anything that I can fetch up from town?"

"Anything you want, Benny?" queried Jimmy, turning to Benito.

Benito shook his head. "You come back?" he asked, nodding to Billy.

"You bet! I wouldn't miss my first real Mexican dinner for anything in Chilao."

Jimmy watched Billy as he caught up Skyrocket and saddled him. Skyrocket felt frisky and skyrocketed round as Billy mounted. Jimmy grinned. Billy had improved beyond words since Jimmy had found him helpless amid blankets and provisions on the high trail to Chilao. Jimmy turned in the doorway as Billy rode up the cañon trail.

"Some day he's goin' to find out who started that 'Doc Burton' stuff, down to town. Then he's goin' to git mad."

"What you do if he go mad at you?" queried Benito.

"Me? I'm goin' listen—and grin. I kind of like to see him git mad. Remember when Ponto kicked him in the stummick, and how Billy set down sudden on that coil of barb-wire fencin' we was unloadin'—and how when he riz up, feelin' of hisself north and south, he apologizes to the burro, sarcastic, for gettin' in his way, and then he grins and asks the barb-wire who's goin' to apologize for gettin' in his way? I sure like to see him git mad. He's so doggone polite about it."

CHAPTER V.

Billy found the storekeeper at home, surrounded by his little Wards, who looked a bit the worse for wear. To them Christmas meant candy and oranges, popcorn and stomach-ache. Ward was smoking his sixth cigar since breakfast time. His wife had graciously made him a present of a box from his own stock—but Ward had a good constitution.

"You sent for me?" queried Billy, after the customary holiday greeting.

"Yep. There's a kind of a Christmas package for you—over to the hotel." Ward's grin might have been interpreted as seasonable or merely inane. Billy suspected some kind of joke, but he could scarcely reconcile that idea with a message calling him to town, which meant a long ride.

"For me! I wonder what it is?"

"I dunno. It come on the local, this morning. Looked like it wouldn't keep long, so I sent word to you by Lopez, who was ridin' over to borrow a gun from Benito."

"Well, thanks! I'll go see about it."

As Billy strode up the hotel steps he noticed a queer figure huddled in a big overcoat, sitting on the edge of the veranda. There was no one else about the place, save Mr. Hungerford, the alleged proprietor. *He* was sitting in the hotel office, wedged into a big armchair and smoking a pipe. Hungerford, whose chief occupations were carrying his two hundred and twenty pounds about, and watching his wife cook and run the hotel, rose ponderously and shuffled out to the veranda, wheezing like an antiquated switch engine.

With the slow dignity of one who has to lean forward and peer over his meridian to see his feet, Hungerford gestured with his pipe-stem toward the huddled figure on the veranda. Then he shook all over as though oppressed with a desire to laugh, but no sound followed this subterranean disturbance. Billy glanced from the strange figure to Mr. Hungerford.

"Lunger," said the hotelman, and he shook all over, as though enjoying some Gargantuan joke.

"I don't quite understand," said Billy, frowning. "There must be some mistake. Ward said there was a package for me at the hotel."

"That's the package," asserted Hungerford. "He had dinner—one-fifty—regular price Christmas and New Years. Seventy-five, week days. He come round to the back door askin' for chuck. Says he come from New York. Some dude, eh?"

"But I don't just see——"

"Ain't you runnin' a place for lungers, up on Chilao? Ward said you was."

"Ward said so, did he! Well, you haven't heard me say so, have you?".

"Well, I can't say I have. But folks says——"

Billy flushed hotly. "Just who is responsible for this? If it's a joke, it's pretty cheap."

"Ast *him*," said Hungerford, gesturing with his pipe. "I ast him for the one-fifty. He says he's broke. I ain't runnin' this hotel for my health."

"I didn't realize that you *were* running it. I had always supposed Mrs. Hungerford was."

Mr. Hungerford stared at Billy, blinked his little, watery eyes, opened his mouth to say something, and finding nothing to say, stuck his pipe-stem in the opening. His oily forehead wrinkled in a heavy frown.

Billy swung from him and stepped up to the man in the overcoat. "My name is Burton," he said, sitting down beside the other.

The man turned his head slowly and stared at Billy—and then at an empty box car across the way.

"I've had the same trouble," said Billy experimentally.

Again that strange, huddled figure turned and stared at Billy, whose tanned face and clear eyes seemed to controvert his statement.

"You don' know what trouble is, kid."

"Perhaps not, but I have a working idea of what it might be."

"Is that wampus a friend of yours?" queried the other gesturing over his shoulder.

"I should say not!"

"He'd rob his mother's grave," asserted the hobo. "A dollar-fifty for a mug of chicken-yard soup and some cold roast pork!"

"Never mind that. Your dinner will be paid for. The main thing just now is, what are you going to do? Have you any friends here?"

The man in the overcoat laughed, a croaking laugh that ended in a fit of coughing. "Friends! Say kid, are you crazy?"

"No. But I've been down and out—broke, hungry, sick, and tired of the whole game.'

"Yes, you look like it!" sneered the other.

"But I pulled out of it," continued Billy, ignoring the remark.

"Say, what's your job? Sheriff, or fly-cop, or somethin'?"

"No. I'm working to get into the forest service. I live up there on that mountain ——" and Billy gestured toward Chilao. "And two of the best chaps in the world are waiting for me to take dinner with them, up in that country."

"What's the use of rubbin' it in? I ain't ast nothin' of you."

"And I don't suppose I have any business to ask questions. But if I can do anything for you, I'd be glad to do it."

The man, who had been staring across the way, turned and gazed curiously at Billy. "What's the big idea? You can't git nothin' out of me. I'm broke, see? And I never done nothin' for you."

"That's all right. I don't want anything. You looked lonesome and all in. The storekeeper and the gentleman in the hotel there kind of wished you onto me—sent word there was a Christmas package here for me. It seems they have a queer sense of humor. I didn't catch on till Hungerford told me. And say, we can't afford to let them put anything over on us! I'll settle for your dinner. Then let's take the trail for the hills. I have a camp up there, and plenty of grub, and an extra bunk. And the air up there is just what you need. What do you say?"

"You mean to hoof it?"

"No. I have a horse here."

The man in the big overcoat shrugged his shoulders and hunched down, staring out across the street. He seemed to have no interest in anything save the empty box car over the way. Billy drew tobacco and cigarette papers from his pocket. He touched the man's arm.

"Smoke?"

The hobo grasped the sack in his grimy paw. "Say, guy, you're human, anyhow! I was dyin' for a pill."

As Billy watched the hobo roll a cigarette, he wondered who he really was and what had brought him to Chilao. Possibly he was some crook, fleeing from the law, or possibly just a bit of city flotsam cast upon the hard shore of misfortune. But Billy asked no questions. The man was sick, apparently friendless, and decidedly bitter toward the world. And Billy told himself that if he actually wanted to help those who were afflicted as he had been, now was his opportunity, in spite of his unpreparedness, his lack of knowledge of the other's actual condition and the hazard of assuming responsibility for the man's health and welfare. Billy had told Benito and Jimmy what he had hoped to do for men afflicted as he had been. But Billy had not anticipated a man of this type. He had vaguely thought of helping men of his own type and kind. But the immediate circumstance cleared his mind of all sentimental haze. He wondered if the man would be able to stand the journey to Chilao. He had taken it for granted that the other would go with him.

"When did you get in?" asked Billy. The

hobo gestured toward the empty box car on the station siding. "With the other Christmas packages—when they cut out that side-door pullman." And he shifted round and looked up at Billy. "What's it to you, anyway?"

"Nothing. I just wanted to make sure Hungerford was not trying to do me—that's all. Do you think you could ride a few miles? We can take it easy. I have a first-rate pony here—easy-gaited and safe."

"What kind of a burg is it, up there where you live, anyhow?"

"There isn't any town. My place is on the crest—the Chilao meadows. I'm alone. The hills cured me. I was in worse shape than you seem to be, when I came here."

"You mean you're invitin' me to roost up there with you—free grub and lodgin'?"

"Sure!"

"Bo, you're crazy!"

"No, I'm not! But that doesn't matter. If we're going on up we'll have to get started right away."

The other seemed to pay no attention to this suggestion. He pulled a grimy *Police Gazette* from his overcoat pocket. Opening it, he handed the sheet to Billy. Billy saw the picture of a stocky, bullet-headed pugilist, in fighting trunks, and crouching. Billy glanced from the picture to the man's face.

"That's me," said the hobo. "Kid Small. I had friends, then. Think I'm kiddin' you?" And he pulled off his hat. The battered ears and the round, shaven head were identical with those in the picture. "I put a guy clean over, oncet. He never came back. I done time for that. When I got out I had the bug. Me friends couldn't see me. I stalls around till I gets wise that I'm a dead one. Then I hops a rattler and beats it West, for me health. That's what the doc at the pen tells me to do. He said it easier than I made it out here." And the hobo laughed croakingly, and coughed.

"That's all right," said Billy as he handed back the paper.

"You mean you're game to slip a few months of eats and sleeps to a dead one?"

"Certainly. I don't care what you have been. It's what you are, that counts."

The hobo glanced curiously at Billy's face. "Say, got a quarter?"

"Yes."

"Flip her. Heads, I hit the grit. Tails, I take a chanct in them hills."

"Nothing doing! *You've* got to decide."

The other's sunken eyes flashed momentarily. "You're gettin' sore, eh? Well, jist to spite you, I'm goin' to take a chanct."

Billy was astonished, later, when the hobo insisted on shortening the stirrups to suit himself. He was also amused at the other's criticism of the Western saddle. He was even more astonished when the hobo mounted easily, in spite of his long overcoat.

"You've ridden before?"

"Me? I was a jock before I got into the boxin' game. But I'd hate to have 'em shoot me picture in this rockin'-chair. Which way do we jump?"

"Straight ahead. Give the horse his head. He knows the trail."

"And let him run? Bo, you're crazy!"

"He won't run. He knows better."

Slowly they climbed the arroyo trail, Billy footing it behind Skyrocket, who carried the squat, huddled figure of the hobo, perched in the saddle jockey fashion. Kid Small criticized the saddle volubly. But finally he forgot to talk in the experience of viewing for the first time the uplands of southern California. It was almost dark when they topped the ridge above Benito's home. Billy gestured toward the distant cabin far down in the cañon.

"Me ride down there! Say, kid, I've rid the jumpers a whole lot, but not down no fire escape. Here's where I quit."

"He'll take you down all right. Just let him have his own way."

"Say, kid, it can't be did. A guy could climb down, but no horse could make it."

"I'll ride him down, if you don't want to."

"I'm callin' your bluff, kid. I ride. But when do we loop the loop? All I want to know is, when?"

"That isn't on the bill, this journey."

"No? Well, I just as soon go under with a hoss on top of me as to hang around and cough myself to death. I should worry."

"You make me tired!" asserted Billy. "You're not going to go out either way. You're going to brace up and get well."

The hobo started to say something when he was interrupted by a fit of coughing. When he recovered he glared at Billy.

"Bo, you're crazy!"

"All right. I'm crazy. But how about yourself?"

"Oh, I'm as nutty as a balloon. I'm goin' to ride this canary down those jumps in the dark. So long, kid."

Billy's queer companion was amazed to at last find himself safely at the bottom of the switch-back grade, after what he had considered a perilous ride into an apparently bottomless pit—for it was dark when they started down into the cañon. The Kid dismounted and patted Skyrocket.

"Where's his stall?" he queried. "Lemme blanket him and feed him. I owe it to him —and then some."

"I'll just turn him into the pasture. Hello, Benito! I brought a friend along to help us eat that dinner."

"Bueno—she ready. The Señor Jim he say you make to stay in town. I say to him that you come back."

"I was joshin'," said Jimmy appearing in the doorway. "Did you find out what Ward wanted?"

"Yes. Meet Kid Small, of New York. He's going on up to Chilao with me, in the morning."

Small shook hands with Benito and Jimmy, who wondered how he happened to be with Billy, and why he wore that big overcoat. And the Kid, nudging Billy in the dark, asked who the "dago" was.

"Benny Benito—and my friend."

"These guys all right?" whispered Small.

"Sure thing!" laughed Billy. "Did you think I brought you up here to rob you?"

"If you did, you lose. Ain't you goin' to blanket that horse?"

"We never blanket them in this country. They're used to the outdoors, day and night."

As they entered the cabin, Kid Small began to feel entirely out of his element, a stranger in a strange land. The mystery of the night, the shaft of golden light in the open doorway, the dim forms of the horse and burros in the pasture beyond, the silhouettes of Benito and Jimmy, the saddles, bridles, and ropes, recalled a play he had seen, a melodrama wherein were train robbers, cowboys, Mexicans, and a stage setting something like this very place. Later, Kid Small relaxed a little. The men were a new type to him, yet they seemed so natural and easy-going, that Small concluded that if they had once been outlaws, they had doubtless reformed.

With tactful consideration for his guest, Billy explained as best he could the circumstances of his meeting with Small and intimated that he was to become a permanent resident at Chilao.

"He's the procession and I'm the funeral," said Small. "Me lungs is on the bum."

Benito glanced at Jimmy. Jimmy frowned as he rolled a cigarette. "That's what Ward wanted to see you about, eh?"

"Yes. He said there was a Christmas package at the hotel for me. He thought he was funny."

"I'm the package, gents," stated the Kid. "But cross me heart if I don't hand that goat down to the hotel a package, if I ever git me wind to workin' right again. So he sends for you to come down and do some of the Red Cross stuff, eh? If I'd 'a' been wise to that——"

"Forget it!" laughed Billy. "I'm not kicking."

"He's crazy," asserted the Kid, gesturing toward Billy. "Or he's got religion—dunno which. But what I'm wonderin' is, how you ever git out of this place. Do you fly, or crawl?"

"It'll look different in the morning," Billy assured him.

Meanwhile, Benito had quietly arranged the dinner—a big bowl of chile con carne, a platter of enchiladas, another platter of spaghetti—Spanish—tortillas, some home-dried figs, raisins, and coffee about the color of old saddle leather. The Kid gazed at this generous array of eatables.

"Christmas Day!" said Billy, gesturing toward the table.

"Here's where the package sheds the string and paper," asserted Kid Small, and he swung out of his overcoat. The transformation was rather abrupt. In his shiny serge suit and cheap cotton shirt the Kid showed up for just what he was—a fighter from the angle of his jaw to his feet. Although hollow-cheeked and worn, his fine physique was evident in the short, strong neck, the arched chest, the slender loins, and the general suggestion of strength concealed beneath the old tailored suit of his more prosperous days. "I swiped the benny from the stock-yards eatin' house, in Chicago," he explained, apologizing for the misfit coat. "Say, where's the washroom in this here joint?"

Billy showed him the basin and soap on a bench outside the door.

Kid Small ate ravenously. He expanded under the influence of the black coffee and told many tales of his fights in the East, of the friends and followers who had helped him spend his money when he was flush,

and who had "ditched" him when it was evident to them that he was a "dead one." Finally he fell asleep on Benito's bunk.

Benito covered him with a blanket, and spread a bed roll on the floor. Jimmy spread his own bed roll in the dooryard beneath a live oak, and invited Billy to share his blankets. They lay and chatted a while, gazing up at the stars.

"He's sure a queer package," was Jimmy's final comment as he drifted to sleep.

CHAPTER VI.

Kid Small was awake and sousing his head in cold water before the others had thought of leaving their blankets. He stretched and yawned, felt in his pockets for tobacco and, finding none, stood gazing up at the cañon walls, occasionally shaking his head and muttering to himself. Jimmy, who had been watching him from his bed under the oak, nudged Billy.

"Did you see his muscles hump in his sleeve when he drawed up them arms?"

"Whose arms?" murmured Billy, half-awake.

"Your friend's, the scrapper."

"No. What was he doing?"

"Nothin' but stretchin' the sleep out of his hide. He's some chunk, that boy."

Billy rose on his elbow. "Looking for the fire escape?" he called, grinning.

"Hello, guy. Say, where's the road out of here?"

"Straight up. How do you feel this morning?"

"Bum. Got the makin's?"

"Sure! Here you are. What do you think of this country now that you can see some of it?"

"She's lonesome, kid. How much of a jump is it to your hang-out?"

"It's not far. We ought to be there by noon." Billy kicked back the blankets and rose. Jimmy followed, grumbling. The Kid shivered as he turned back to the cabin, where Benito was making a fire. Away from town and the railroad, Kid Small was like the proverbial fish on dry land. Secretly he wished himself out of this place, back where there were stores and sidewalks. He was afraid of the trails, and even more afraid that the others would find it out. But he had the stubborn grit of the fighter, doggedly willing to take his punishment until he was either counted out, or had won.

Hot coffee and biscuits with the inevitable frijoles, restored him to something like himself. And to keep from thinking of the ride before him, he busied himself helping to catch up the horse later, in again shortening the stirrups to suit his length of leg.

Just before they left, Benito brought out a gunny sack with some jerky tied in it—a welcome addition to Billy's small store of meat. Kid Small mounted, overcoat and all. He seemed nervously anxious to leave the cañon despite his dread of the trail. With a casual "So-long!" Benito's guests began the ascent. Jimmy and Benito watched them, the Kid hunched in his big overcoat, and staring straight ahead as they plodded up the switch-backs. Billy striding along behind, occasionally turned to wave to his friends. When they reached the comparative level of the ridge, the Kid drew a deep breath. He gazed out across the morning hills to the town, far below. Then he turned and looked back into the cañon. He glanced at Billy, and in his glance was covert admiration.

"Do you ride down to that dump every Christmas?" he queried.

"Oh, right along—every few weeks," laughed Billy. "You'll get used to it."

"Not me! Where do we go from here?"

"The horse will show you. Up the ridge, to the left."

Kid Small hesitated, gazing at the misty vastness of the morning across the cañons and arroyos below. "She's lonesome, kid! A guy would go nutty up here, listenin' to himself think."

"You may like it better, up on Chilao. I guess we can keep from thinking too much. There's lots of work to do, stringing fence and getting up wood. You didn't see the dog, did you?"

"You mean that pup that followed us up last night?"

"Yes. I forgot him, when we came down the cañon trail. I wonder where he went."

"I thought he belonged down there," said the Kid, gesturing toward the valley.

"No. He belongs to me. Well, he'll turn up."

Kid Small slackened the reins. The trail for Chilao was rugged enough, but a boulevard in comparison with the cañon trail. The Kid finally forgot his fear in gazing out across the country at the hazy peaks in the distance, the innumerable arroyos and valleys and the occasional cañon, rock-

walled, and to him, sinister. Then suddenly, as they drifted among the pines of the crest, he pulled up, as a melancholy and long-drawn plaint rolled through the forest.

"It's Rip—telling us what he thinks of us," said Billy.

"I'll say he's tearin' off the sad stuff! Who is this Rip gent, anyhow?"

"My pack burro. They call 'em donkeys, back East. You can see the corral, over there—and the cabin, just beyond."

As they entered the meadows the Kid shivered a little. The ground was mottled with patches of melting snow. Faint shafts of sunlight fell slanting through the pine-tops.

"So this is your dump, eh? Now, I thought you said you was on top of a mountain?"

"This is the top. There's a whole lot of top, to Chilao; several hundred acres, some of it rolling land, some of it level."

The Kid shook his head. He had imagined all mountain peaks as being decidedly pointed; they appeared to be so, from the valley. But this place was almost level, something like a park on a big scale, with its pines and stretches of grass.

Skyrocket stepped briskly up to the cabin door. Small got down and stretched. So this was the kind of place that "lungers" came to, to get well! He walked round the cabin—the first log cabin he had ever seen—inspecting it curiously. Then he followed Billy to the corral, evidently amazed by the simplicity of the arrangements for taking care of the animals. He noticed the stream that ran across one corner of the inclosure, and the lean-to stable. He shook his head.

"That donkey needs clippin'," he asserted as he eyed Rip.

"That's his overcoat," said Billy, laughing. "And he wears it winter and summer. Sheds out a little in the hot weather, but he does not suffer half so much from the flies and the heat as a horse does."

"Looks like a dago in a fur coat," said Small, and again he shook his head. Things seemed strange and unreal up in this silent country. Moreover, he was tired. The excitement of riding the trails had died down, leaving him limp and spiritless. He entered the cabin with Billy, gazed at the log walls and the fireplace, and swinging out of his overcoat, he lay down on the spare bunk in the living room. Billy made a fire and asked the Kid if he were hungry.

"No. But if you've got somethin' to drink—I could stand a shot in the arm."

"Nothing but coffee. I'll make some, right away."

"You ain't got any booze?"

"No. But the coffee will put you right."

The Kid was asleep before Billy had the coffee ready. Billy stood gazing at him a moment. Then he stepped out softly.

Chuck had not made his appearance. Billy wondered what had become of him. There were fresh dog tracks in the melting snow about the cabin. And presently, as Billy was cleaning away some dead leaves and sticks that had caught on the lower wire of the corral fence and choked the stream, Chuck volleyed into him, apparently out of nowhere. Chuck did not bark, but growled and squirmed, rolled in the snow, jumped against Billy, nipped his hands and did everything but explode in his evident desire to make it known that he was glad to get back and find his master at the cabin.

"Where in heck have you been?" queried Billy when the bombardment had subsided.

Chuck sneezed and wiped his eyes with his paw.

"Been playing wild man, eh? Well, let's go and get something to eat."

Chuck followed Billy to the cabin, sniffing along the doorsill as he realized that there was another man-animal about; and the dog knew, in two sniffs, that this was the stranger who had ridden to Benito's cabin with his master. Moreover, this stranger was now asleep on the bunk in the living room. Chuck padded in, sniffed along the edge of the bunk, trotted out to the kitchen, was fed, and finally, after a sort of tentative exploration of the cabin, he curled down in the middle of the room and pretended to sleep. His little, slant eyes were closed—but he was far from asleep. He had accepted the presence of the stranger in the big overcoat, because his master had—but Chuck had too much of the bulldog in him to take any one for granted.

Billy smiled at Chuck's obvious suspicion. Perhaps the companionship of the dog would be good for Small. They were alike in kind, both strays and both fighters by nature. And they were both free to go or come as they pleased. When the Kid awakened they would have something to eat. Meanwhile, there was work to do outside. Billy had noticed that the Kid was thinly clad in summer underwear and a light cotton shirt.

Hesitating at the door, Billy turned and stepped softly to his bedroom.

When the Kid awoke, an hour later, he found a set of heavy underwear and a flannel shirt on the foot of his bunk. Billy had given of his own scant store of clothing to the extent of his "other" set of underwear and his "other" flannel shirt; charity on a fifty-fifty basis—quite different from check-book charity.

Billy was wise enough to realize that things would not always go smoothly in camp, especially when his guest became more accustomed to the routine. There would come reaction, the monotony of loneliness, irritation, and judging from the Kid's under jaw, some frank and coarse-grained criticism of Chilao as a home. Yet the knowledge that he was actually helping the Kid—giving him an opportunity to help himself—fortified Billy against any such contingency. If Kid Small grouched, Billy would overlook it for the sake of the game. The situation would draw heavily on Billy's patience, optimism, and cheerfulness. These were his assets. His liabilities would accrue fast enough. If his winter supplies would only hold out, he thought he could manage the rest of it. And now that he faced the responsibility of taking care of even one who was destitute and afflicted, Billy realized what a tremendously impossible undertaking he had planned when he had told Jimmy that he wished to establish a home for "lungers."

With the assistance of Jimmy and Benito he had been able to make a home for himself, and regain his health. But he was still a stranger in a strange land, without prestige, and with very little cash in the till. He was up against the real thing, yet it was a good game—this helping the other fellow. Billy determined to play the game for all it was worth.

But to speculate in possibilities was a poor way of beginning. The cross-cut saw and the ax, out by the woodpile, offered a more immediate solution of at least one detail. So Billy went at it, sawing and chopping against cold weather to come.

As he worked he wondered why Chuck had refused to follow him into Benito's cabin Christmas Day. Chuck had deliberately refused to be coaxed in. For a long time the dog had lain watching the animals in the pasture. Then, as it grew colder, he had become restless. The cabin on Chilao was his home—and toward the cabin he turned that evening, plodding deliberately up the trail, across the meadow, and to the doorway of the silent roof-tree where he sat and howled intermittently until he happened to think of Rip out there in the corral. Chuck, fond of the animals, made a bed for himself beside the burro. About midnight a mountain lion padded stealthily across the meadows and circled the corral. Rip became uneasy, shuffling about beneath the lean-to until Chuck happened to sniff a taint in the air—and Chuck knew just what was out there—that moving shadow in the deeper shadows of the pines. Chuck shot from the stable straight for that slowly moving shadow, which dissolved in the darkness of the circling forest. Chuck knew that his enemy would not return that night, so he trotted back to the corral, sniffing and growling as he nosed the tracks in the thin snow. But when daylight broke through the forest, Chuck took up the trail and tracked the lion for miles, finally losing the trail in the rock pinnacles of a distant range. Then the little dog had retracked, arriving at the meadows to find his master there.

Gossip, that slipshod, intemperate dame, sometimes does a good turn unwittingly. It came to the ears of Supervisor Simpson that Billy Burton was taking care of a "lunger" up at his camp on Chilao. Simpson thought that Billy had about all he could do to take care of himself. The folk of the valley town looked upon and spoke of Burton as a tenderfoot with more money than brains. Supervisor Simpson reversed this view to himself, having pretty well estimated Billy's character and ability that summer. And if Burton had the nerve to homestead the Chilao meadows and had—as rumor declared—built himself a comfortable cabin and had fenced the meadows, why it seemed that such an ambitious young man was worth serious consideration.

Simpson called in the head ranger. Together they went over the latest map of the Chilao country, estimated the cost of a trail from the town to the peak, reviewed their scant appropriation for winter trail building and decided to brush out a much-needed pack trail to the crest—a trail whose value would be more than tentative in case of fire in that section.

"But young Burton don't know the first thing about laying out a trail," asserted the

head ranger, following a suggestion advanced by his chief.

"No. But I notice you're getting fat, this winter," said the supervisor.

The head ranger helped himself to one of Simpson's cigars and searched a long time for a match before he spoke. "Jimmy Gale knows every foot of that country—and he's been in the service," stated the head ranger experimentally.

"Jimmy is a capitalist now," laughed Simpson. "He's getting fat, too—for him. He's a mighty good man."

"I'll get right at it," said the head ranger. "How about putting Jimmy in as foreman of the trail crew?"

Simpson smiled broadly. "That's all right—if you can get Jimmy. If he'll handle the crew, put him in charge. Benny Benito can pack and cook, and young Burton can learn to handle a pick and shovel. You'll have to get some one to handle the powder. I saw McCabe in town the other day. He isn't doing anything."

"I'll ride over to Jimmy's to-morrow morning," said the head ranger.

CHAPTER VII.

For three days Kid Small stuck pretty close to his bunk, where he lay, feverish and sullen, while Billy cooked, chopped wood, and strung wire on the posts that had been set that fall. In the evenings Billy memorized rules, or tiring of that, he played with Chuck, who was always ready for a rough-and-tumble.

Kid Small seemed to have lost interest in himself, the cabin, the outlands, and life in general. He answered Billy's carefully chosen questions gruffly. He paid no attention to Chuck, who made one or two mild overtures toward an acquaintanceship. Billy appreciated the other's despondency. He himself had been through that phase of new fortunes in a strange land. Billy wisely refrained from trying to cheer his guest deliberately; from talking with him much. He knew that the Kid's ultimate salvation lay in the Kid himself. He would have to go "on his own;" strike out for shore until within reach of the rope that Billy kept carefully coiled and ready to throw at the right moment.

The morning of the fourth day after the Kid's arrival, Billy made breakfast, washed the few dishes, fetched some fresh drinking water, and getting but a grumbling reply to his inquiry as to how the Kid felt, he strode out and busied himself stringing barb-wire—a task which is no special joy.

Chuck followed Billy to the meadows and watched him for a while, but the stringing of wire was uninteresting to a dog of Chuck's years and activity. Presently Billy realized that Chuck had disappeared. Chuck had gone back to the cabin. He wanted to know more about the stranger who never went anywhere and never spoke to him. Chuck scratched at the door until the Kid got up and let him in. Chuck immediately grabbed one of the Kid's boots and started round the cabin with it—an obvious invitation to play. The Kid tried to catch him—not because he wanted the boot, but simply because the dog had it. Finally the Kid gave it up, stooped, and shied his other boot at Chuck. That was something like it! Chuck dropped the boot he had been worrying and grabbed up the other. This was a great game! But the stranger did not seem interested. So Chuck dropped the boot and trotting over to the bunk, offered to make friends—there and then. The Kid pushed him down. Chuck's little, slant eyes diminished to questioning dots. He was not wanted? Very well! He would see if something would not stir this queer, inanimate individual to action. Chuck nosed close to the bunk, affecting disinterestedness. Then with a quick dive and snap he seized upon the leg of the Kid's pants that lay across the bunk. He backed away growling and shaking the pants. The Kid jumped up and grabbed at them. Chuck started round the cabin, became entangled, but fought valiantly. The immediate vicinity was a sort of maelstrom of dog and pants—with no intentional pun. The Kid dashed in, grabbed those most essential coverings, and loosening Chuck's grip he hit him a clip on the head that rolled him halfway across the room. But the pup did not whimper, although he saw stars, possibly dog stars. He scrambled to his feet, bristling. Step by step he stalked toward the Kid who sat on the bunk pulling on the disputed garment. The Kid thought that Chuck was bluffing. He laughed. A dog dislikes to be laughed at. Within three feet of the Kid, Chuck charged. A snarl, an oath, and a soft, tearing sound, and Chuck was out of the door and halfway across the meadow, before the Kid realized just what had happened.

Chuck trotted up to Billy and laid a strip of cloth at his feet. Billy frowned, puzzled for a minute. Then he recognized the cloth and where it came from. He dropped his hammer and started for the cabin. The Kid was at the washbasin when Billy appeared.

"Did he bite you?"

"No. But the little—son of a gun tried, all right! And I don't blame him at that. I handed him one for swipin' me boots. At first he was foolin'—but I wasn't game. Then he shoots in and hands me this," and the Kid stuck out his leg. "Now would you look at him, bristlin' and crouchin' for another go! He's some dog! Gimme the trainin' of that tike and I'll make a scrapper out of him. Come 'ere, you pig-eyed, pants-snatcher, and I'll hand you another one!"

"He'll nip you!" warned Billy.

The Kid crouched and squared away. Chuck leaped back and growled. Suddenly the Kid squatted and stuck out his hand. Slowly Chuck crept up, still bristling.

"He'll nip you, sure!" said Billy.

"Not him! You watch 'im, bo."

Chuck stuck his head out, his jaw set, his slant eyes pin points of fire. Then, ignoring the Kid's hand he leaped up and licked the Kid's face.

"What did I tell you? Me and him is wise to ourselves. I know how to handle them kind! I trained some pit bulls, back in the old town. You just leave him to me."

"I'm willing, if you don't make him ugly."

"Ugly nothin'! Pit bulls is the best naturedest dogs a-goin' when they ain't in a fight. Why, the best one I ever saw just hated to scrap. But he was trained that way. When he'd finish off a dog he'd come a-mouchin' over to me and lick my hands like he was askin' me not to make him scrap any more—and mebby him chewed up and bleedin' for fair. But he always done what I told him, fought to the finish. I raked in some mazum' on that dog."

"You're feeling better this morning."

"It's a sure smoke! Say, bo, I was sick! I was willin' to hand over me stack, any time. But this mornin', the Chuck dog he takes one of me shoes to the mat, payin' no attention to the gong. And he starts scrappin' with the referee. He didn't wait for no decision, but beats it. It kind of stirred me up. What you doin' out there, anyhow?"

"Stringing fence."

"Has a guy got to have a license to work that stuff?"

"Not in this town," laughed Billy.

"Well, it's me for the chuck. Anything left?"

"Sure! Help yourself."

The Kid warmed up coffee and managed to scrape together a breakfast. Billy returned to his work. A little later, Chuck and the Kid appeared, striding across the meadow. The Kid had on Billy's sweater in place of the big overcoat. He looked the athlete from head to heel, his face alone indicating his real condition.

"Say, mister!" the Kid called out as he swung up, "can you give us a job."

"Sure! Go back and get a pair of gloves —the old leather pair on the table; and you might fetch the other ax."

The Kid swung round and stepped briskly toward the cabin. When he returned Billy initiated him into the mysteries of stringing fence. After two hours of steady work, Billy said he was hungry. The Kid, who had shed the sweater early in the game, slipped into it.

"How much more of this you got to do?"

Billy gestured toward the long line of naked posts that ran diminishing across the meadows.

"You own all this here?" queried the Kid.

"I expect to. I'm homesteading this piece. Have to do just so much improvement work each year to secure my title to it. The boys down in the cañon helped me get started."

"The dago and the red-headed guy?"

"Yes."

"But what's the big idea? There's nothin' up here but scenery."

"Yes. And good, clean air, and quiet, and outdoor work. I was in worse shape than you are—a whole lot—when I came to this country. The doctors had said I would live a few months longer. I gave up doctoring and took to the hills. Now I have my health, a home, and the promise of work in the service, next season."

"Meanin' your pipes are workin' right. Say, who furnished the kale to buy the trimmin's for this sky farm?"

"I bought what few things there are. Jimmy and Benito built the cabin for me and set the fence posts. I helped all I could."

"You mean nobody is backin' you with the dough?"

"No."

"And you figure to make this a hobo heaven for all the down-and-outs like me, eh?"

"Well, I had some such idea to begin with."

The Kid gazed at Billy with a new interest in his hard face. "So you're doin' this like the Salvation Army—only they ain't no crowd to chuck nickels and dimes on the drum, eh?"

"That's about it," laughed Billy.

Kid Small shrugged his heavy shoulders. "Bo, you're crazy! And you'll get the dirty end of it, every jump. The more you do for guys that is down and out, the worse they'll hand it to you after you get 'em goin' easy."

"Do you feel that way about it?" queried Billy, looking the other in the eye.

The Kid flushed slowly, but he met Billy's level gaze without flinching. "I was a sore bird, the first three days after I lit here. I was sore at you for bringin' me up to this God-forsaken dump."

"That's all right. I didn't expect a sick man to sing and whistle all day. You're getting sore didn't bother me any."

"I'll say it didn't! First I gets sore at you. Then I lamps you whistlin' and workin' like I was a picture on the wall. Then I gets sore at meself for gettin' sore at you; see?"

"I understand. Let's forget it—and eat."

"We eat!"

They trailed to the cabin, with Chuck tagging behind, occasionally grabbing up a mouthful of snow from the patches between the trees. Unseen, a buck deer watched them from a clump of brush edging the meadow. The gentle warmth of the noon sun, scarcely apparent as warmth unless one stood still, waged an indifferent warfare with the evaporating snow. Occasionally a faint breeze stirred the placid noonday air; then the tang of winter was evident, the clean, cold tang of the distant white peaks sending their message of greeting to Chilao.

The boys stamped the moisture from their boots and clumped into the cabin. The Kid blinked in the half light, barely able to discern the window opposite. He felt his way to his bunk and sat down, his head between his hands, suddenly weak and dizzy.

"You'll be all right after we eat," said Billy.

Chuck, with his head tilted quizzically, stood watching the Kid.

"C' mere, pup!" And the Kid gestured to Chuck.

Chuck leaped to the bunk, rooted round and curled down against Kid Small. The Kid could feel the dog's heart beating in quick, strong, steady pulsations. He put his hand to his own chest.

"Me works is on the bum," he muttered.

CHAPTER VIII.

A heavy fall of snow had made all outdoor work impossible. The Kid and Billy were playing checkers—the top of a cardboard box marked off into squares and checkers sawed from a broom handle—when Billy pushed back his chair.

"Kid," he said casually, "I wish you would tell me how to train for a fight."

The Kid, astraddle of a box, tilted back and flicked the ashes from his cigarette. His eye brightened perceptibly.

"Why, it's this way, sport. First you git boiled out, to git the booze out of your system. Then you start in with light work on the pulleys and the bag. When you git tuned up a little, you start in with a run every day, steppin' off a couple of miles and back, easy. When your wind is workin' right you can do your six—if you don't draw yourself too fine. Then you work out with your pardner, regular—and plenty of shadow boxin' and work with the bag and mebby some work on the mat. If you git goin' stale, you lay off the heavy stuff a few days, and generally you git sore at the whole bunch and feel like quittin'. And that is the time to watch your step, and take it out on your sparrin' pardner. You know when you're right. With some guys it means feelin' ugly. With some it means feelin' like you was worth a million. Me, I always felt like tearin' loose and tankin' up, to the limit. But every guys knows better than any trainer, when he's ready to travel the route. No booze, no smokes, and you eat what is handed to you. If you can't make the weight it's a dry-out for yours—but that weakens a guy. It ain't the scrappin', it's the trainin' that gets your goat."

Billy seemed absorbed in piling up the hand-made checkers. "That is," he said presently, "if a fellow is in condition he can take a lot of punishment without any special harm to himself?"

"It's a sure smoke! Hard trainin', when a guy's been hittin' the booze and ramblin', is what kills you off. The lad I sent acrost —and he never came back—had a weak heart from travelin' the booze route. And his weak heart got me three years in the pen. It was ten, but the boss of me ward got a doc to swear I was croakin', and some of his friends signs the paper. The governor done the rest."

"I suppose a man ought to keep in condition pretty well all the time, even if he has no fight ahead."

"Sure! But a guy don't."

"And sooner or later he breaks down and has to quit."

The Kid blinked and stared at Billy. "What you rubbin' it in for, anyhow?"

"I'm not. I was thinking of the pup, here. He'll keep in condition and be a fighter till he hasn't a tooth in his head."

The Kid frowned as he studied Billy's face. "I don't get you," he said finally.

"Oh, it was nothing personal. I was just thinking that the game of life is like the fighting game. A fellow has to keep in condition to play the game well—and to be ready for the unexpected. And he's got to either win or lose. He can't loaf on his reputation long."

"Meanin' me?"

"Any one. You, myself, Jimmy Gale, or the President of the United States."

"Say, sport, you talk like a preacher. If a guy is done, he's done, ain't he?"

"If he thinks so, he is. I wish you felt well enough to teach me how to box."

"What's the big idea? You layin' for some guy?"

Billy saw that the Kid was interested in the idea of a scrap. The Kid might not be interested in merely instructing Billy to box. And the suggestion, which premised something far from Billy's intent, awakened Billy to possibilities he had not contemplated. He was "laying for some guy" and that "guy" was none other than Kid Small himself. Billy's hesitation convinced Small that his friend meant business.

"What kind of a guy is he, anyhow?" queried Small.

"He's twenty pounds heavier than me," said Billy. "And he's a born fighter. I'm not. But I'd like to whip him to a standstill."

"That's the dope!" said Small with enthusiasm. "But if you got to give him twenty pounds, you got to go some. You handle yourself quick and you got good wind, I seen that. I'd just as lief give you a few pointers when me pump gits to workin' right."

"I suppose I ought to cut out smoking, even the little I do," suggested Billy. "I guess I don't need to get boiled out. I get a good sweat every day. If you'll coach me, I'll start in with a morning trot round the meadows, every day. The snow won't hinder after we break a trail. If you'll teach me to box, I'll go after the man just as soon as you say I'm fit to tackle the job."

"That's her! Sounds better than that preacher stuff you been handin' me. Say, Kid, I'd give me right mitt to see you lick any guy that done you dirt."

"Well, don't hand me that mitt too hard to begin with," laughed Billy. "Let's quit pretending we're interested in playing checkers and get to work."

"What? Now?"

The Kid hesitated. He had not expected to be called so soon. But he loved the fighting game. Billy Burton had befriended him. The Kid saw a chance to make himself useful. And because a good fighter loves to see a good man win—even covertly admires the man that is better than he is himself—Kid Small rose to the occasion with some of his old ringside enthusiasm.

They moved the table to the wall. The Kid took off his coat, vest, and shoes. Chuck gravely inspected the Kid's garments, wondering what was going to happen. It was far from bedtime. The Kid stepped out to the middle of the room. His arms hung at his sides.

"Poke me in the mug," he invited, sticking his head forward. "Poke hard—and straight for me mush."

"Without gloves?" queried Billy, hesitating.

"Sure! And say, sport, put 'em up like this. You ain't workin' at a soda fountain. That's her! Now hand me a sleep."

Billy punched awkwardly at the Kid's face. Billy's fist passed through thin air. Without moving his body the Kid had dodged the punch. He grinned at Billy's surprise.

"Here, bo, when you start a punch, don't reach back like you was takin' it off the shelf. Start her right from where you are and shove your shoulder into it. Try another jab."

This time Billy estimated his distance more carefully, but the Kid's face was not there when the punch arrived. Billy worked faster, only succeeding, however, in winding himself in a vain effort to reach the Kid's jaw.

"Now try for me wind—right here," suggested the Kid. "Go to it! Shoot 'em in."

Billy "shot 'em in" fast enough, but the hurricane of punches slid off the Kid's forearms and swatted against his upraised palm as he shifted lightly from side to side. Billy noticed that the Kid had not given an inch of ground, but rather, seemed to be boring in and crowding him, although on the defensive. Then the Kid slowly took up the offensive, touching Billy lightly on the nose, the jaw, the stomach, and smacking his ribs with open palm with apparent ease. Billy became flustered, lost his head, and swung for the Kid's jaw. The Kid ducked and, as Billy's weight followed the punch, the Kid shot out his hand, palm toward his opponent. Billy's nose was flattened by the impact of his own aggression. He stepped back and laughed.

"You play with me as if I were a bag of beans."

"Me works is on the bum," said the Kid, gasping for breath. He coughed as he stepped to the bunk and sat down. "I got to get me wind before I can do much of this," he said, his tough forehead netted with a frown as he realized how far from condition he was.

Billy felt that he himself had had enough of it for the time being. He had picked up several pointers, watching the Kid's manner of blocking and side-stepping. To learn to box, he must be cool, quick, and even-tempered under punishment.

"You got speed," said the Kid as he donned his vest and coat. "But your feet ain't mates. Git a rope and skip a hundred, once a day."

Chuck had been an interested spectator in the front row. But he soon realized that the bout was friendly, and he had given up watching the Kid's legs so assiduously, for at the beginning of the bout Chuck had just about made up his mind where he would grip and hang on should his master show the least sign of needing assistance.

After they had cooled off, Billy and the Kid stripped and soused each other with cold water. A brisk rub with a rough towel, and they both felt better. In fact, Billy had never felt better in his life. This game embraced fast exercise, friendly competition, keen interest—the finest natural stimulant in the world.

"I'm going to cut out smoking," Billy told the Kid several days later. They were resting from a fast bout and had been discussing fighters and the fighting game in general. "I wish we had some gloves and a punching bag."

"You can work out on me!" and the Kid grinned. "But when we git to mixin' fast, I'll say the gloves'll save your map some."

"I'll tell you! I'll send to Los Angeles for a set. Or we can ride down and take the train from Chilao."

"Not on your life, bo! This here dump looks like the Waldorf to me when I think of them trails."

"All right. I'll ride down to-morrow, if the snow is not too deep on top. There is no snow down the hill a piece."

"Go to it—and get a couple of pairs of sneakers. I got a sliver in me foot off your ballroom floor, bo. I take eights."

"I'll do that. I'll ride down to Chilao to-morrow. I can order the things by letter. You and Chuck can run the ranch while I'm gone."

A week later the gloves and sneakers arrived at the town of Chilao. Jimmy Gale, whom Billy had told of the expected package, brought it up to the meadows.

Jimmy was curious as to the contents of that package. He felt of it as he tied it to the back of his saddle. The address tag showed it to be from a sporting-goods store. He wondered what Billy was up to.

Jimmy found out—that evening, about an hour after supper.

Billy and the Kid shed their coats—the cabin had been none too warm even with the log fire—pulled on the gloves and sneakers and went at it. The Kid now rolled fewer cigarettes. His wind had improved, even to the extent of jogging an easy half mile with Billy in the morning. The Kid laced into Billy in a lively manner, now that the gloves took the place of bare knuckles. Billy side-stepped, ducked, and dodged—often enough into a straight punch that staggered him. The Kid's punches, apparently effortless, seemed to carry the weight of a ton of brick. Billy reddened under the punishment, but came back, game for more. Enthused by landing on the Kid's jaw—an opening that the Kid had deliber-

ately given him, although Billy did not realize it—Billy speeded up, and naturally overdid it. The Kid cooled him down with a wicked, short jab in the stomach, not because he wanted to stop him, but merely for discipline. Jimmy Gale was at first amused, then interested. Finally he became wild in his enthusiasm, circling round the boxers and refraining with difficulty from offering advice. Chuck, who thought the fight was becoming too general, sneaked in and fastened on Jimmy's boot—a stout riding boot, built for service; but Jimmy knew that the dog was attached, without question. This put a stop to the bout for the time being.

The Kid, who had stripped to his undershirt, showed what he really was, physically. Jimmy was secretly astonished at the Kid's splendid chest and shoulders, and the smooth-working, long, fighting muscles that never "bunched," but were ever apparent. Jimmy did not see how a man built like that could have anything the matter with his lungs. The Kid's face was battle scarred and tanned to his shirt-collar line, but the skin on his arms was as smooth as ivory.

"Want to put 'em on?" invited Small, indicating Jimmy.

"With you?"

"Or him. You guys take a whirl."

"All right, if you'll keep the pup offen me," laughed Jimmy, who felt that his weight and strength would keep Billy at a proper distance.

The Kid was interested to see just how much of his teaching Billy had absorbed. Jimmy lashed out wildly—right off the bat, as though it could be but a question of a few seconds before the bout would be terminated. Billy had to do some fast foot-work and dodging to keep out of the way. One of Jimmy's wild haymakers smacked on Billy's ear and he saw red, but recovered himself, and taking advantage of that brief second of hesitation that the amateur is apt to indulge in after landing a "good one," Billy shot a perfectly sound and healthful jab into Jimmy's lunch room. Jimmy gasped and sat down, blinking his amazement. He didn't quite know how it had happened.

"And to think *he* could cut my feet out from under me like that!" gasped Jimmy, as he got up. "But if you was to turn me loose without these here pillas on, I reckon I could keep him busy. If I could get holt of him oncet—but he ain't there when I am."

"It would be all off with the Burton boy," laughed Small. "But he's comin'! Did you notice the jolt he handed me, right in me mush—that time?"

"I sure did. I noticed it and I heard it land. And if you call your face your 'mush,' pardner, what do you call this?" queried Jimmy, rubbing his stomach gently. "I feel like I ain't et nothin' for a month."

"Soak me one," said the Kid, turning to Billy. "Soak me one in the wind."

Billy jabbed at the Kid's stomach. The blow landed with the fierce impact of a club on wet clay, swatting against muscles rigid as beech roots. Jimmy whistled. The Kid grinned.

"I was set for it—saw it comin'. 'Course, if he'd got me there when me muscles was slack, it would 'a' been stars and stripes for this bird."

"But what's the idea of this here boxin' business, anyhow?" queried Jimmy. "Can't you fellas git enough exercise playin' with the cross-cut and the ax?"

Billy was about to say something when the Kid interrupted. "Me pal, here, is shapin' up to hand some guy his. He says that when he's trained fine enough he'll go to it and lay the guy out or take a sleep tryin' it. But he never says who the guy is."

"Mebby he runs the store, down to Chilao," said Jimmy, grinning.

Billy said nothing. He thought that it would be just as well to let that idea ride as it was.

"You mean the jasper that called me a Christmas package?" queried Small.

"That's who Jimmy means," stated Billy, and the Kid inferred that Billy also meant that individual.

But Jimmy Gale was even more astonished when the boxers stripped and took their customary cold shower of water from a bucket. He thought any man that would suffer such a shock must surely be in earnest.

As they rested and chatted that evening, the talk turned to local matters. Jimmy, who never did anything hastily, finally reined the talk round to the subject of trail building. He had a job for Billy if he wanted to work that winter. There was a trail to be built from the town to the peak. He himself had agreed to handle the trail crew. Simpson the supervisor had hinted

that he might pick up a man or two in the hills.

"Which means you, for one," said Jimmy. "Benny is goin' to pack in the tools and the powder. Then he'll do the cookin' till we git through. Would you like to learn somethin' about trail buildin'?"

"What do you say?" And Billy turned to the Kid.

"Not for mine! Ridin' them trails is bad enough for this bird. But *makin'* 'em? Not on your life!"

"I'll let you know in the morning—and thanks for the offer," said Billy turning to Jimmy Gale.

Billy Burton had mentally accepted Jimmy's offer to work, but had hidden his eagerness to be earning money beneath a casual exterior because the Kid was present, and because he wished to talk with the Kid privately. Jimmy was staying at the camp that night and Billy had no opportunity to interview the Kid until next morning, when he approached the other on the subject. Billy did not suggest that the Kid go to work; he merely stated that he himself was going to join the trail crew; that the cabin on Chilao would be headquarters for the men, with Benito as cook. The Kid took all this as a matter of course, stating, however, that working with a pick and shovel was a "wop job" and that he could see nothing in it. Billy was disappointed that the Kid had not volunteered to help the cook, or engage in some minor task, surmising that the men would consider the Kid a parasite if he allowed the chance to pass without even indicating his willingness to help out. But Kid Small ran true to form. He was a pugilist who had worked harder than any laborer, while training for his fights; but to actually handle pick and shovel was to him a sort of degradation.

CHAPTER IX.

When a man of peace goes to war there is usually something doing. Billy Burton was planning a campaign—training for a pretty big undertaking. And because the Kid realized that Billy was in deadly earnest, he taught him some tricks of the trade not listed in a correspondence course on boxing. The Kid showed Billy how to knock out a man twice his weight—premising that Billy could get up enough speed to take advantage of a system of blocking several left jabs in succession, following this up with a right swing and a quick short left to the jaw. The Kid confessed that this was the only trick that had ever put him down for the count. He emphasized the fact that the result depended entirely upon forcing the opponent to a system of defense as deliberate as a mathematical exercise. He illustrated both sides of the system, and, after a week of pretty steady work, admitted that Billy was quick enough to land the punch, but that he lacked steam. Meanwhile, Jimmy Gale had rounded up his trail crew and Benito had packed in the supplies.

Billy decided to accumulate steam without calling attention to his method. So he stopped stringing fence in the interim of waiting to go to work on the trail, and took to cutting logs with the cross-cut saw, single-handed, and rather pleased that the Kid disliked this special form of amusement. Incidentally, Billy accumulated quite a respectable cordage of wood as his arm and back muscles hardened and developed. But he overdid it, in his eagerness. One night the Kid told him that he was getting muscle-bound and suggested shadow boxing and more foot-work as the remedy.

And, almost without realizing it, the Kid himself was slowly shaping up, doing a little more work each day and complaining less of his health, while Billy was becoming a decidedly lively customer to handle. He knew he would never have the back and shoulders of a fighter, but that he was fast, had good wind, flexible muscles, and a cool eye.

And Billy learned the invaluable lesson of taking punishment without even an inward manifestation of heat or irritation, thereby conserving his nervous energy until the right moment, when he would "tear loose" with an attack that kept the Kid busy. Billy possessed that elasticity of artery and muscle which goes with clean living, and a certain elasticity of temperament due to inexperience, which enabled him to take chances that a man who had suffered a knock-out in the ring would view with caution.

The only thing that really bothered Billy was the Kid's occasional reversion to his old, pessimistic attitude, when he would lay off boxing and smoke many cigarettes, his utter indifference to all about him manifest in his not offering to even help with the work necessary to run the place. But Billy never urged. Rather, he whistled and attended to the detail of cooking and washing dishes

and chopping wood as though the Kid were not there. Billy was wise enough not to overdo his part, but it taxed all his optimism to see the Kid apparently satisfied with the day—and with no ambition for the future. When alone, at night, Billy often wondered if he had not made a mistake in taking an interest in Kid Small; if, even after the other had regained his health, he might not drift back to town and fall into his old habits. The Kid had suggested once or twice that he thought of going to Los Angeles—but Billy had not offered to accompany him, and the Kid did not care to tackle the trails alone. Yet when Billy recalled the Kid as he had seen him that Christmas morning, huddled in his big overcoat, on the hotel steps—and then looked at him when he squared away for a bout with the gloves, as keen-eyed and clean-cut as a panther, Billy was more than glad that he had befriended him.

Billy's personal supplies were running low. Jimmy Gale remedied this in his usual, casual way. The trail crew was organized, the cabin turned into a camp for the men, Benito installed as cook and Billy's name entered on the pay roll, even before the actual work began. Jimmy Gale offered the Kid work. The Kid flatly refused to handle pick and shovel. Jimmy suggested that he might help the cook. Kid Small intimated that Jimmy was a street car whose trolley was off the wire. Jimmy admitted that he himself was no boxer, but that given room to step around he would be willing to adjust his own trolley and the Kid's also. This exchange of pleasantries was interrupted by Billy before these two positives made a contact and short-circuited. Eventually, the Kid "saved his face" by helping with the kitchen work when he felt like it, but he knew that he was really loafing, while his pal was swinging pick and shovel from early morning until dark. Billy saw that Jimmy and the Kid were not overfriendly, so he asked Jimmy to pay no attention to him, stating that he had evolved a plan of his own.

With the extra cots, the cooking, the comings and goings of the trail crew, the extra burros in the corral and the general air of industry, the camp on Chilao assumed the aspect of a small mountain hotel crowded to capacity. And in the evenings the camp heard many interesting yarns, when Jimmy, Benito, Billy, McCabe, and the Kid loafed in front of the log fireplace and smoked and chatted. Chuck was a general favorite. He grew fat. Only his youth saved him from becoming actually lazy. The Kid was an agreeable companion and popular with the men. He was a good mixer—both ways. He told stories of the ring and the track; and his small audience, realizing that he knew whereof he spoke, paid him silent tribute that was natural enough, and quite evident, but not good for his soul, just then. Billy saw this. The Kid was playing to the gallery and slowly drifting back into a soft condition, smoking too much, and yet in spite of that, in far better shape than he had been when he arrived at Chilao.

Occasionally the Kid would visit the men as they worked on the trail, especially interested when they had to "shoot" a piece of cliff, or shatter some huge bowlder with dynamite. He enjoyed the excitement of these moments, the roar of the shot as it ripped and gored the hillside, the tenseness in the air, that did not subside until the last flying fragment of rock had clattered down. But the monotonous chuck and clang of pick and shovel had no charm for him. That was work for "wops."

Billy's plan, slowly maturing, was speeded up one morning by Jimmy Gale as they worked together along the mountainside.

"Why don't you hand the Kid his hat, some mornin'?" said Jimmy. "He's eatin' your chuck and smokin' your tobacco and wearin' out your blankets and doin' nothin' to make good. He's layin' down on you, pardner."

"I've been thinking about that, Jimmy. But he helped me string fence and get up wood, this winter. He has put in some good licks."

"Mebby. And now he's stringin' you. It's none of my business, but I hate to see you sweatin' to feed that short horn."

"He'll come out all right," asserted Billy.

"McCabe was kind of hintin' round that you had took on somethin' that was too big for you to handle. That you didn't have the nerve to fire him."

"It isn't that," said Billy, unruffled. "He'd pack up and leave at a hint from me. It's because he takes our working on the trail as a sort of joke. If he really knew what—well, what you think of him, for instance, I think he'd dig in and go to work. The only game that he takes seriously is the fighting game."

"Yes—and it looks like he was tradin' on that to hold down a mighty soft job. Looks like nobody round here was dyin' to tell him where to head in at."

Billy, gazing out across the ranges, turned suddenly. "Jimmy, I want to lay off to-morrow, all day."

"Sure! Goin' to town?"

"No, but I'll be busy."

"All right. We're goin' to shoot a whole lot of stuff to-morrow and they won't be much else to do till we git through with that."

"I've been dodging a responsibility," said Billy, smiling. "I'm going to tackle it, to-morrow, some time."

"If you mean handin' the Kid his hat, you can't do it too soon to suit me. The boys think you're kind of soft, for lettin' him work you that way."

"Don't worry about the Kid, Jimmy. If you want to worry real bad, just worry about me."

"You ain't scared of him?" queried Jimmy.

"No."

"Uh-huh? Well, I thought you'd get wise. Gimme a hand with this here chunk of scenery. We'll roll her over the edge. That last shot sure started some big ones."

They put their shoulders to the rock and heaved. The bowlder hesitated, toppled, and crashed down the hillside, mowing a ragged path through the underbrush.

"And I seen the time when you would 'a' busted yourself tryin' to roll marbles off a table," laughed Jimmy.

Billy nodded, but he did not smile. He was thinking hard.

CHAPTER X.

Next day Billy laid off. He started out with the men, but presently he disappeared. Jimmy was puzzled, but the placing of shots and the care of his men kept him pretty well occupied. Next day there would be plenty of pick-and-shovel work.

Billy, after leaving the crew, sauntered across a ridge and found his way to a distant mountain meadow, where, with Chuck, he spent the day doing absolutely nothing but rest and think. At noon he shared his luncheon with the dog, who was obviously discontented with doing nothing; but Chuck would not leave. With the intuition of a gentleman he realized that his master was troubled in spirit, and with the loyalty of a Spartan he stuck it out until evening, despite the temptation to trot over to camp and see how things were going.

Just as the crew were quitting for the day, Billy joined them. On the way to camp he took Jimmy to one side and told him to propose a bout with the gloves, that evening.

"Just mention it as though you didn't care a whole lot whether the Kid and I went at it or not."

Jimmy glanced sharply at Billy's grave face. Billy immediately grinned.

"Just for fun," he said, checking the question in the other's eyes.

Billy was hungry, but he did not eat much supper. Jimmy noticed this and asked Billy if he were not feeling well.

"Never felt better," said Billy.

"Then mebby after we git through, you and the Kid'll give us a chanct to see some of that fancy boxin' you been practicin' all winter. You been layin' off to-day—and the Kid sure ain't been breakin' his neck workin'."

The suggestion of a bout appealed to the crew. They wanted to see the Kid in action. They had heard of him in action often enough. They seemed to think of Billy as a sort of animated punching bag—a kind of background for the Kid's performance.

"It won't be much of a show," stated Billy. "All I can do is to try and keep out of the Kid's way."

The Kid grinned. He had an audience, and while he did not intend to go after Billy hard, he determined to show this audience some fast work. During his relaxation from training he had become a bit soft, but he had accumulated energy, and he felt fairly fit to go a few short rounds. Billy was not thinking of the audience, but of a combination of defense and attack that the Kid had taught him. And because the men were anxious to see a bout, Billy felt somewhat justified in trying to work out his plan.

McCabe, who seldom entered the kitchen, volunteered to help wash the dishes. The Kid grinned as McCabe went at it, realizing that the other did not know they would not box for at least an hour after having eaten.

Meanwhile, the men amused themselves teasing Chuck, who scrapped with them impartially until that good-natured tike, having decided that he had had enough of it, concluded that part of the evening's enter-

tainment by annexing Jimmy's hat and diving under the bed with it, where he lay placidly chewing the brim until Jimmy routed him out with the broom.

"That pup always picks on me," said Jimmy, exhibiting his hat. "Once he hooked to my boot. He ain't safe."

"He knows his friends," said the Kid.

Jimmy glared, but refrained from retorting. He thought he knew what was coming to the Kid—an unvarnished request to take his hat and walk.

Finally the cook and his assistant had things cleaned up. The table was carried into the kitchen and the benches backed against the walls. Billy flung the door open, as the living room was heavy with tobacco smoke.

The Kid stripped to the waist and pulled on his sneakers. Billy followed his example, wondering, however, why they could not have gone at it in their undershirts and pants, as usual. When they squared away, Billy realized how formidable the Kid actually was—and this was because Billy had never thought of a serious go, until recently. The Kid opened up with some fast footwork and a shifty attack that was new to Billy, tapping him whenever and wherever he pleased.

"You been gettin' stiff, workin' on the trail," he told Billy, who had failed to block several short-arm jabs.

Billy nodded, his lips tight. Slowly they warmed up. The men laughed as Billy landed a stiff jolt in the Kid's wind. The Kid was not hitting hard, but he sent them over briskly, so briskly that Billy had to take much more than he gave, missing many chances to block, and taking his punishment. But Billy's footwork became fast. The Kid had to travel to keep the pace—a pace that could not last long. Jimmy Gale was puzzled. He knew that Billy could make a far better showing with the gloves—and he was evidently slighting his chances for some reason or other.

"Looks like he was scared," said McCabe leaning toward Jimmy. "He's steppin' all over the room and lettin' the big fella chase him."

"He ain't scared," stated Jimmy brusquely. "But there's somethin' wrong. He don't act natural."

Billy was working out his plan, waiting for the chance that he hoped would materialize. As he dodged and ducked he watched the Kid's breathing.

It was evident to the men that the Kid's wind was not all that it should be; that he was using himself up in attack, without any chance of a let-up unless Billy mixed it.

"Why don't you mix it!" said the Kid, as Billy ducked a straight jab for his face.

Billy shook his head. Then, with a rush that brought the men to their feet, Billy bored in, jabbing wickedly. The Kid fell back to an easy defense. Billy speeded up. Suddenly the Kid saw a light in Billy's eye that he had never seen there before—and because he was an old hand at the game, Small countered a haymaker and swung another for Billy's head, to test his opponent's temper. The Kid knew that Billy was either getting mad, or that he really meant business. Billy took the jolt with a grin—a wicked grin that held no friendliness, and came back with a vicious uppercut that all but landed. The Kid's face hardened. His crouch grew more stealthy. The fighting animal showed in every line of his face and his body. To those who watched, the Kid seemed to be saving himself that he might land a knock-out. They were surprised. They had not counted upon Billy as a serious opponent.

McCabe took a step toward the fighters, his Irish blood hot to get as close as he could. Jimmy pulled him back.

"Don't git excited, Mac. This here ain't your scrap."

The bout had gone nearly two minutes—two minutes of pretty fast work. There had been no agreement as to when it should end. Billy hoped that the Kid would not call it off just then. And for his part, the Kid knew that he could not call it off jokingly, for Billy was getting hard to handle. He was boring in and in, taking jolt after jolt as though each was a snowball. The mill assumed the aspect of a pretty stiff scrap. No one doubted that the Kid could knock Billy out if he chose to do so—and no one dreamed that Billy could knock out the Kid—or that he would even try.

Pressed hard, crowded so close that he had to give ground, the Kid heaved his shoulder into a punch that dropped Billy in his tracks. The Kid stepped back, breathing heavily. On hands and knees, Billy pulled himself together—and through some peculiar slant of mind he began to count himself out. "One, two, three"—slowly his head cleared. As he counted eight he came up with a rush. The Kid, relaxed but wary,

met him with a straight left that Billy ducked.

"You taught me how to turn that trick," said Billy—the only word he had spoken during the mill. And he sparred lightly until his head was steady again.

"Got enough of this?" queried the Kid.

Billy shook his head. He speeded up again, feeling as though nothing this side of a thunderbolt could stop him, this time. He knew that the Kid packed that same thunderbolt, but he doubted that the other now had the wind to launch it.

"You're steppin' strong!" said the Kid, gasping out the words one at a time. And he grinned, stiff-lipped, as he spoke.

Jimmy, nor Benito, nor McCabe, watching with all the intensity of animals, could tell just how it happened. A sudden flash of gloves, the lightninglike shift and tramp of feet, and a blurred realization that Billy was jabbing with his left at the Kid's face. Billy almost jumped from the floor as he shifted and threw his body into a straight right. The Kid's head snapped back. His hands went out as though to grasp at some invisible support; then he wilted so silently and undramatically that the men thought it was a joke.

Billy stripped off his gloves and bent over the Kid.

"Get some water," he panted.

A bucket of water was soused on the Kid. He sat up and stared round.

"Did—did *you* hand me that?" he mumbled. "I didn't hear nobody shoot."

"I tried to put you out," said Billy.

"Tried!" The Kid was helped up and to a bench. Then, like a good loser, he thrust out his gloved hand. "Bo, it's a sure smoke!" His head sank for a second or two. Then he looked up. "But you gotta say I showed you the route! And you made me travel it! If me wind wasn't on the bum I'd——"

"Oh, I expected to get mine—right along," said Billy, as he helped the Kid pull off the gloves. "But I was out to get you if I could."

"If I'd 'a' knowed you was sore, I'd 'a' watched you closter, sport. You wouldn't 'a' got that chanct."

"I wasn't sore. I never liked you better in my life. If I hadn't liked you a whole lot, I'd never tried it."

"Did you get that!" exclaimed the Kid, turning to the men. "This pal of mine likes me so dam' much he rocks me to sleep with a shot that would 'a' shook a house! But I got to say to the world that he done it—and he done it clean. I takes me pill and I chews her down, slow. *Good* night!"

Whether it was because Kid Small had suffered a change of heart, or because of some queer, canine reason known to Chuck alone, from the day that the Kid went down beneath Billy's fist, the dog took a peculiar and enduring liking to the pugilist. Chuck's attitude, from being merely friendly, became chummy. He followed the Kid about, and if the Kid happened to leave camp without Chuck knowing it, when he did realize that the Kid was gone, Chuck would track him—often to the trail crew, with whom the Kid visited frequently. The Kid had lost nothing by his defeat, but had actually gained a degree of popularity with the men because of the game manner in which he had admitted himself whipped. If Jimmy Gale had even hinted at a job, at that time, the Kid would have gone to work without a word. As it was, a week slipped by before Billy realized that something more serious than a knock-out was troubling Kid Small.

The men laid off Sunday. Sunday evening Kid Small told Billy that he was leaving in the morning. Billy assured him that he was welcome to stay, but the Kid shook his head.

Monday morning, shortly after the crew went to work, Jimmy Gale sauntered down to where Billy was leveling off a stretch of trail. They were by themselves—the rest of the crew being farther up the grade, where McCabe was placing a shot. Jimmy grinned.

"Reckon you handed him his hat, all right! And you come mighty clost to handin' him his finish. He looks like a cloud-burst just afore she pops, this mornin'. You sure beat him at his own game."

"Not exactly that, Jimmy. He was not in good condition. I counted on that. If the Kid had been in shape he would have wound me up quick, after he saw I meant business."

"Well, you done it, anyhow. And that's what counts in this country. But I don't sabe just why you done it, at that."

"I had a plan—I guess it didn't work."

"Well, it sounded to me like it worked all right when it landed. What did you expect? Did you want to kill him?"

"Nope! That wasn't the idea."

"Well, you're a queer one! You go to work and knock down a reg'lar scrapper and then you look like you was sorry you done it. He's sore—and he'll sure fan it for home now."

"Yes, he said he was going, this morning. But I don't believe he's sore at me. He's too game to get sore, although I do think he is still wondering how it happened."

"He sure looks that way," said Jimmy, gesturing toward the grade above. "Here he comes, packin' that overcoat which looks like a tent. I guess that's about all he owns. And the pup is follöwin' him. Funny how that dog has took to him. I allus thought dogs knowed somethin'."

"I know they do. I'll bank on Chuck's judgment, any day."

Jimmy Gale shook his head as he strode back toward the men. He met the Kid round a turn in the new trail. The Kid squared himself somewhat aggressively in front of Jimmy.

"Where's me pal?"

"If you mean Billy—he's down there a piece, tendin' to his business."

The Kid's under jaw moved out slightly. "He is, eh? Well, I want to frame one on him. This is private, between me and you. Do you get me?"

"Nope—but I'm listenin'."

"Then listen careful, bo, for you got to get this right. It's me last throw. If you beat it, I quit. I want a job workin' on this here gradin' gang. It's a wop job, but I'm game. And I got me privut reasons for askin' for it."

"I dun no as I can use you, right now. We're gettin' along kind of fair, for wops."

"That's the answer, eh?"

"Reckon that's her."

"All right. You're the big boss. I quit." And the Kid picked up his overcoat and slung it across his shoulder. "Where's the pup?" he asked of no one in particular.

"Dunno," said Jimmy, turning away. "Hold on there! If you don't know what 'Fire!' means by this time, you got a chanct to find out. They called twict now. They're goin' to shoot, back there."

The Kid whistled for Chuck, but the dog was not in evidence. The Kid ran down to where he could see Billy on the trail below. Chuck was not down there.

"He was here, a minute ago," muttered the Kid, frowning.

Kid Small was back beside Jimmy, who touched his sleeve. "You better squat here, under this ledge. No tellin' where them rocks'll land."

"Where do they shoot?" queried the Kid, shaking off Jimmy's hand.

"Right ahead, where you're lookin'."

The Kid's gaze was fixed on a spot up the trail, twenty or thirty yards above them. Suddenly he started to run. Jimmy cursed as he called him back. The men, on the hillside far above, shouted and waved to the Kid, but he kept on running. And as he ran he called hoarsely to Chuck, who stood in the trail wondering at this excitement, of which he seemed to be the center. The men up the hillside called to the dog. Chuck cocked his head, and his stub of a tail moved slightly. Everybody was excited! But what was it all about?

The Kid stumbled forward and flung his overcoat across the dog. The earth trembled. A shivering roar flattened the Kid to the ground. Then came the quick, pattering fall of rocks, the crackling of brush crushed by huge flying chunks of bowlders, the whisper of hurtling dust and grit—the silence, and a thin veil of acrid smoke hanging over the trail.

Chuck squirmed from beneath the overcoat and sped up the trail more like a brown flash than a dog. The men scrambled down to the trail, meeting Jimmy and Billy as they came up from below. Kid Small raised himself on one hand, shook the dust and loose rock from his back, and got slowly to his feet.

"Never touched me!" he exclaimed. "Where's the dog?"

"The pup spread his little ole wings and flew for home," said McCabe.

"He make to go like he think quick," asserted Benito.

"Then he's all right," said Small, gazing at the overcoat on the trail.

Some one laughed, but it was not Jimmy Gale. He turned to the Kid.

"This here boulevard is kind of dusty," he said, looking the Kid hard in the eye. "She needs cleanin' up. You won't need no overcoat for this job, but you kin mosey up to the cabin and git a shovel. You're a hour late, but I reckon we'll call it a day."

Billy Burton turned and walked slowly back to his work. His throat felt tight, he did not know just why.

Chuck, who did not know what had hap-

pened, but that something tremendous *had* happened, decided to go back and investigate. He returned, circumspectly, sniffing the trail, and ready to run in any one of four directions. He found the men cleaning away the rock and dirt, and with them the Kid, who had found a spare shovel among the drills and bars.

"Git out of me light!" said the Kid grinning, "or I'll shovel you off into the scenery. Lookin' for a place to flop, eh? Well, there's me coat, by the bush there."

Chuck smelt of the coat, sneezed, and finally curled down, his little, slant eyes blinking as he watched the Kid work.

Down the trail Jimmy was talking with Billy Burton.

"And the knock-out did work, after all," Billy was saying.

"Nope!" said Jimmy stubbornly, but he simply had to grin. "It took dynamite."

The rainy season was over. The new trail from the town of Chilao to the peak was completed. And the Kid, invariably accompanied by Chuck, had labored day after day in a sort of grim, pugnacious silence. He had vowed that when the job was done he would call himself square with the world, and under no obligation to himself or any one else, to swing a pick or push a shovel again. He detested the work, but deep down in his heart he loved the idea of sticking it out—and this was his real battle.

Jimmy Gale revamped his opinion of the Kid that winter, and Jimmy was influenced as much by the Kid's silence as by the actual work he did.

When the trail was finished and the men had departed to the lower country, the Kid picked up his overcoat, and, accompanied by Chuck, strode back to the camp. In the pocket of his shirt was a slip for his time, and in his heart was an irrepressible desire to leave the hills. He hungered for town and the companionship of his kind. He felt that he was fit enough to get into the fighting game again, even if he had to start in as a "beaner"—a hash-joint scrapper, and work his way up to his former standing. And this was natural enough, as the fighting game was his game.

When he spoke of this to Billy Burton, Billy was wise enough to offer no objection, but, rather, he encouraged the Kid in the idea.

Just how the Kid approached the boxing promoters at Vernon, and how he put over six consecutive knock-outs in as many weeks, is told in another story. Jimmy Gale's performance at the ringside, the last evening of the series, was also mentioned in the Los Angeles papers—for Jimmy was there, and his money was on the Kid to an extent that astonished the fans. Perhaps Jimmy's betting was the biggest factor in the Kid's final success, for it became rumored about the clubs that the Kid was a dark horse that could step with the best of them.

When the Kid finally signed up to meet the fastest lightweight the coast could produce, it was Jimmy's money that backed him. Then suddenly the Kid disappeared. Rumor had it that he had cold feet and had flitted. The newspapers offered cartoons of the Kid sprinting for parts unknown. Reporters searched high and low, but in no training camp was the Kid to be found. Meanwhile, Kid Small was working out up on Chilao, where he stepped many fast rounds with Billy, skipped the rope, did shadow-boxing, punched the bag, and did his daily trot around the meadows.

The crowd was strangely silent when he stepped into the ring on the night of the big fight. The betting average, which had swung toward his opponent, began to run more evenly. Jimmy placed a pretty big sum on the Kid. The result is history.

Then the Kid disappeared again. The papers surmised that he had gone back East to look for bigger game. The Kid had gone back East—as far as Chilao.

Billy was in camp, talking with the supervisor when the Kid strode in, his coat over his arm. After Chuck had had his innings, Billy introduced the Kid to the supervisor, who already knew much of the Kid's history. Strangely enough, the first thing the Kid said when he entered the cabin, was: "Well, I've come back."

"You sure have," laughed Billy. And it was at that moment that the Kid realized fully just what Billy meant. And that evening, while Billy and the supervisor planned to make the cabin on Chilao a sort of headquarters for the rangers riding the high country, the Kid and Chuck sat out in the moonlight staring at the surrounding forest. Presently the Kid who had been mentally reviewing the past year's happenings, turned to Chuck.

"Did you hear what he said?"

Chuck moved his stub tail slightly.

"Uh-huh? Well, I'm back—to stay. The scrappin' game is all right, for a while. But I got me wad and I keep it, see? And I got me health, and I keep it. Get me? That guy in there is the boss of these here works. He's the promoter of this here hill game. What do you say if we hit him for a job?"

Chuck would have said yes to anything the Kid might suggest. Chuck wagged his tail and cocked his head.

"All right. You can sit in me corner while I go against that guy."

The Kid "went against" the supervisor hard. "I want a job," was the first punch he sent over. The supervisor was taken aback.

"But, Small, you can make more money at your game in a week than you could up here in six months."

"Did I say anything about money?" queried the Kid, and the muscles tightened at the angles of his jaw.

The supervisor laughed. "I've just arranged with Burton here to work for me as ranger, this year. That leaves a fire patrol job for somebody."

"Which is me," asserted the Kid. "I'm off the white lights for good—take it from me!"

"Well, I guess you boys have got me down," said the supervisor, smiling. "It's going to be a dry summer."

"It sure is!" said the Kid, grinning.

"And if you can get a recommendation from—well, Burton, here, I'll think about taking you on for the season." And the supervisor's eyes twinkled.

"Do you mean it?" queried Billy, staring at the Kid.

"You said it! I've come back—to stay."

THE "PRIVATE" AND THE PUBLIC

SOON after "Private John" Allen, of Mississippi, had received his last licking in a race for Congress, he was discussing with some of his Washington friends the impossibility of foreseeing what the voters would do in any given set of circumstances or, in fact, any usual situation.

"The public doesn't think," he declared with great earnestness. "There was I running up and down my district like a lean and hungry rabbit, leaping from platform to platform with the agility of an infuriated ape, yelling my head off with the throat power of a possum dog at midnight, and handing out opinions with the wisdom of Solomon at his best.

"With what result? Licked! I tell you the public *won't* think. You can't make it think. It fools you sometimes by looking thoughtful, but that's always a stall, a joke!

"It reminds me of Tom Jones' boy. That lad was the champion meditator and leading contemplater of the entire South. Reflection was his middle name, and the verb 'to ponder' was ice cream and cake to his youthful mental palate. No matter the place or the hour, Tom Jones' boy was the lead horse when it came to dragging around a heavy load of brain burdens and head splitters. He was the Nancy Hanks of cogitation and the Nellie Bly of reconsideration. He astounded a whole county by his achievements in bethinking himself and his Joblike patience in harboring ideas.

"The kid got on my nerves. I'd never seen so much wisdom in one bundle. I told his father so. I said: 'Tom, that boy's the most thoughtful human I ever saw.'

"Tom didn't enthuse much. I thought it was because he was used to the kid. I asked him: 'Tom, does he think this way all the time?'

"'All the time,' Tom told me. 'He just thinks and thinks, thinks and thinks. He does more thinking than anybody, man or woman, young or old, in this part of the world. It's amazing!'

"'Yes,' I said; 'it is. What does he think about?'

"'Think about?' Tom said, as if I'd insulted him. 'Think about? Why, not a gosh-dinged thing!'"

On the Dixie Highway

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "Adios, Abigail," "Record Overboard," Etc.

Out of the air, so to speak, and on the sleetiest day in Detroit, the teller of this lively tale is handed a parcel of thirty acres in Florida. What did he do? Well, put yourself in his place for a few minutes.

I WAS flat on my back beneath a ramshackle old bus, trying to twist a rusted-on nut off a bent body bolt with a bad wrench, when I heard this voice from the front of my little old tumble-down car-repair shop on Antoine Street in Detroit.

"It's a marvel," were the crazy words, "that in such vile weather you're not enjoying life at your place in Florida, instead of biding here in the cold and sleet."

Knowing at once that an insane man had blundered into my shop, and not caring to take a chance on what he might do with whatever head-busting tool he'd lay hold of, I squirmed from under the car. My place in Florida! He might just as well have mentioned my place in the moon, seeing that I'd never got any closer to Florida than Cleveland.

But the looks of the owner of this voice belied his wild words. He was a dapperly dignified, elderly man with close-clipped snow-white side whiskers and rosy furrowed cheeks, swaddled almost to the heels in a fur-lined overcoat with a wide pup-seal collar, and with a polish on his silk hat as if there'd been no such a thing as sleet in the world. He was sizing me up—probably considering me a pretty rough-looking customer in my oily dungarees and greasy cap—out of a pair of blue eyes as clear and sane as a baby's, only they twinkled more.

"My place in Florida, I think you remarked, sir?" said I, swabbing the grease off my hands with a piece of waste.

"Just so—your place in Florida," was his perfectly matter-of-fact reply, as if talking of something as tangible as the taxicab waiting for him outside my shop.

"My place in Florida," said I, "would be about twenty-two miles southeast of Key West, wouldn't it?" I didn't ask that question to be flippant, but by way of showing him that I wasn't so foolish as I might look.

"Twenty-two miles southeast of Key West, as obviously you know, would merely make you the proprietor of a patch of sea water in the Gulf of Mexico," replied the twinkly eyed old lad. "Your place in Florida is all dry land; about thirty acres of very excellent dry land indeed."

"Judge," said I, "the wife drags me off to the movies so often of nights—to relax me after my hard day's work, she calls it—that there are times when I can't tell whether I'm myself or somebody on a screen. And right now is one of those times—along of this place of mine in Florida that I never heard about till three minutes ago."

"Quite so," said this smiling elderly party in the fur coat. "Perhaps, by being more explicit, I can help you to a keener sense of reality. Your Florida place, then, is in Volusia County on the east coast, where the mean winter temperature, day and night averaged together, is around sixty degrees, though the thermometer there often shows eighty degrees at midday on Christmas Day. Your thirty acres are on the Dixie Highway—which there is paved with asphalt—so that every automobile making the full tour of the east coast must pass your gate coming and going. Your grove—more than half of your thirty acres is planted in orange and grapefruit trees—straddles this Dixie Highway, which gives you a frontage, with riparian rights, of six hundred feet on the Halifax, one of the bluest and most beautiful salt-water rivers on earth. There is a dwelling, now somewhat in disrepair, but feasible and with some articles of furniture in it, on your place in Florida. Your grove, I believe I have omitted to mention, is only a few miles from Daytona; and Daytona, because of its really magical beauty, is fancifully but

justly called The Dream City of the Land of Sunshine and Flowers."

It sounded like the man who stands in front of the screen and tells you all about it while the pictures of Samoa or Somaliland or some such place flash by; and all the time the biting sleet of Detroit, where sleet was invented, was pelting the dilapidated wooden walls of my repair shack from all directions. But I had become unaware of sleet; the rippling sound of all this beautiful blue water I was hearing about, and the perfume of my orange-grove blossoms, made me feel drowsy, so that I had to pinch myself hard on the back of the leg to find if I really was awake.

"Don't be too hard on me, your honor," I mumbled. "I admit taking a few drinks, which twisted my head along of my stomach being empty at the time, but that was all hooch talk that I handed the cop about somebody having wished a Florida orange grove on me. So if your honor'll let me go home about my business, and not hold me for an examination as to my sanity, I'll be much ob——"

"Permit me," the smiling old boy cut in on me there, "to aid you by specifying a little further. You have heard, I presume, of your uncle Richard of Montreal?"

I had, vaguely. My mother had never said much about this rich, cranky brother of hers. But I remembered that, considering his sister too well born to marry my father, who like myself was a mechanic, my mother's Montreal brother Richard had never spoken to her from the day of her marriage to the day of her death. So I replied that, having reached the age of twenty-nine without ever experiencing the least hankering to meet my uncle Richard of Montreal, I was perfectly willing to let it go at that.

"I am aware of the reason for your feeling in the matter," said the calm-speaking old boy. "But, as his solicitor, I may allow myself to say that your uncle Richard, like most men possessed of peculiarities, has been both misunderstood and maligned. That, however, is beside the present point, which is that, being an old man, with few remaining relatives, he is putting his affairs in order. The thirty acres in Florida which he has deeded to you are part of a parcel which he took over many years ago while boring unsuccessfully for oil in that section. He lived, in fact, for two years in the house which he built with his own hands on the place, which at that time was literally of a piece with the surrounding jungle. The Florida squatter whom he permitted to occupy the parcel a quarter of a century ago died several years ago, which explains why the dwelling has fallen into disrepair and the citrus grove has suffered from neglect. But for all that it is a tidy bit of property on the Dixie Highway. The abstract is as clean as a whistle—unencumbered by any old Spanish claim, as so many Florida parcels are. Here is the deed, the transfer of which to you has been recorded at De Land, the county seat of Volusia County."

The precise-speaking old lawyer was in the act of handing me this blue-bound paper, all stamped and marked up on the back with indorsements, when my wife, it being the noon hour, came into the shop with some hot dinner for me in a bucket. I noticed that her teeth were chattering, and, though she pretended to be perfectly warm, I didn't think much of myself for not being able to rig her out in the right kind of a coat, the one she was wearing being worn and not amounting to much anyhow. I saw, too, that she was pretty red around the eyes, though she told me her eyes were that way because the kitchen stove had gone smoky and then altogether out while she was baking, spoiling the bread.

"Bill," I said to her, her name being Wilfreda, "don't get scared or anything, like I was when I heard about it, but any time you feel like ducking all this Detroit sleet and stuff, why, all you've got to do is to take a little run with me down to my place in Florida and——"

She shot a swift look at my eyes. It doesn't take 'em long, maybe you know, to learn how to tell from the look of your eyes whether you've been drinking or not. But, my eyes appearing all right to her this time, she switched her inquiring gaze to the fact of the elderly party in the fur coat. He, a keen one, caught her expression in mid-air.

"Of course, madam," he said, raising his hat to her and rubbing the mystery in a little deeper, "the place in Florida to which your husband refers belongs equally to his wife, the two of you owning it jointly."

She gave a little gulp then like they do when they're contemplating having what they call a good cry, and the old boy, seeing that too, hastened to clear things up for her as he had for me. It was fun for me to watch her face while he was telling her

about our place in Florida. The prettiest of them—and I suppose a man can't be accused of bragging if he calls his wife a pretty woman—look prettier than ever when they're listening to happy news.

"Florida—an orange grove—the open country again!" was all she could say, her eyes the size of silver dollars. A born-and-brought-up Michigan-farm girl, she'd been raving for two or three years, or from the time the prices of things to eat climbed out of sight, about how I ought to switch from bus-tinkering to farming.

"My client," the keen-eyed old lad put in then, "will expect to hear from me whether you are going to take up, or, at least, inspect, this parcel in Florida. You will want an hour or so to confer in private as to that. I shall be back after having a bite of lunch," and, hat off again to the little wife, away he went in his taxicab.

So, over the hot dinner she'd brought me, Bill and I conferred. The gist of the conference was that, since the time I'd tossed my job at the automobile factory to start on my own with this whacketty little car-repair shop, I'd just about been getting by and that's all. The only thing I know is gas engines—they haven't marketed one yet that I can't make behave when it goes bad—and when folks brought me their bucking cars to be fixed up they didn't begrudge me the dollar-and-a-quarter an hour I charged. But they didn't bring me enough cars. That's why Bill was wearing a faded old coat that wasn't warm enough for the weather; and it was the scheming to make ends meet at home, and not any smoky cookstove, that was putting the red around her eyes so often. I couldn't afford to pay rent for a shop on some busier Detroit street where I'd get more cars to patch up, and it looked as if things would go on as they were, if they didn't get worse, for a thousand years.

"Let's go!" said Bill, all of a sudden, when we'd got this far.

"You're on, young feller," said I. "When?"

"I can pack by day after to-morrow," said she, and I wondered why it would take even that long, for we didn't have much.

"Day after to-morrow is the day we start," said I, and just at that instant the rosy-faced old lad walked in again, silk hat as shiny as before, sleet or no sleet, and he caught my words.

"I shall inform my Montreal client, then, that you are going to take up the Florida parcel," said he, shaking hands with both of us. "I wish you both," he added to that, on his way out to his taxicab again, "all the luck and happiness in the world." And he was gone.

So that's how the steering gear of a man's life, to say nothing of the wife's, is shifted all in a jiffy. An hour or so before I'd been wondering, while tugging at that rusty nut, where the next month's rent for the shop and the home shack was coming from; and now I had the deed in my dungarees for a thirty-acre "parcel," as the genial old lad called it, in this Land of Sunshine and Flowers that I'd been dreaming about all my life, and we'd be on the way there day after to-morrow!

Late that night, when I was just about falling asleep, the wife asked me softly if I was awake. I told her I was.

"I've a queer idea in my head," said she.

"If it's a long idea," said I, pretty sleepy, "you can tell it to me in the morning."

"You've never seen your uncle Richard of Montreal, have you?" she asked me.

I told her I hadn't.

"Nor even a picture of him?" she pinned me.

"No," was the answer to that, too. Pictures of my uncle Richard, I told her, wouldn't have been popular in my dad's home after the way my uncle Richard had ignored my mother's existence from the day she married till the day she died.

"Just as I thought," said Bill triumphantly. "Of course it hasn't occurred to you, stupid, that that nice old man who gave you the deed to-day to the Florida farm isn't your uncle Richard's solicitor at all, but your uncle Richard himself?"

"Turn over, Bill—you're having a nightmare," was my answer to that.

"Your uncle Richard himself," she went on, "who, now that he's getting old, wants to make good to you, his nephew, for the way he treated your mother. It's as plain as the nose on your face!"

"The nose on my face," said I, "ought to be snoring by this time. Go to sleep."

"He has exactly the same twinkly blue eyes and the same crow's-footy cheeks like an old winter apple and the same rosy color that your mother had," Bill went on raving.

"So has Santa Claus," said I. "Lemme sleep, will you?"

"And he found out somehow that you were struggling," she went on, womanlike, wide-awake as a chickadee when a man wants to sleep, "and he has given you this lovely piece of land in Florida just to see what you'll do with it, and he doesn't care to make himself known to you till he finds out if you——"

"Bill," I said to her then, resting my heft on an elbow, "you've got the worst case of movie-itis in Michigan. If the screen stuff keeps on seeping into you this way you'll have a temperature of a hundred and five, and be babbling that you're Mary Pickford, by morning. Forget it. Life as it is and movie life are a million miles apart. My uncle Richard, me eye! The old bird with the slick silk dicer is just what he says he is. Now how 'bout tearing off a few hours' slumber, us two, what?"

"Just you wait and see if I'm not right!" she got in the last word, as per usual, and then she allowed me to drift into dreams of a place where there were alligators a-plenty.

II.

We got away from Detroit in my old open-faced flivver on the day we set all right, looking like a gypsy outfit with my tools in a chest and our couple of dinky trunks strapped on the running boards, the kitchen ware and crockery and bedding, all we'd kept of our skimpy household layout, piled on the back seat, and the dog curled up atop of the bedding. I had just a hundred and forty-two bucks, got from selling the lease and good will of my shop, in the jeans when we headed south. But Bill and the dog didn't seem to be worrying about the slenderness of the bank roll wherewith the three of us were to begin life anew on the blossomy big toe of the United States mainland, so I couldn't see how worry would get me anywhere either. I wasn't forgetting that my Florida place—it took me a long time to get over the habit of laughing whenever I used those words, "My Florida place"—was on the Dixie Highway, over which, I'd heard, a million cars, more or less, pass every tourist season. Some of these Dixie-Highwaying cars would have to go bust, and those that went wrong near my "parcel" could be set right by me at regular repairing rates. So I snuggled down, as Bill and the mutt did from the minute we were off, for a good ride.

That's what we had, too—as fine a flivver ride as ever I'd dreamed of—till the morning when we hit that perditious piece of quagmarsh, miscalled a road, between Waycross, Georgia, and Jacksonville, Florida. You've heard, I suppose, of that sacrilegious stretch of sloughy sand and mire. They've repaired it now, or are going to repair it, or something. But, up to the time I'm talking about, that bedeviled bog between Waycross, Georgia, and Jacksonville, Florida, had caused more well-meaning human beings in cars to lose their religion, thereby nudging them toward that hotter bog which is paved only with good intentions, than any other rutted path on this globe.

The November rains and the slipping, sliding wheels of thousands of heavy Florida-heading cars had completed the chronic ruin of this misnamed road when we struck into it. There are few roads that a flivver can't flounder through, traveling in low and with the radiator a-boiling, if it is allowed the path. But there was no chance for me to stick to the hub-high rut with my flivver on account of the slews and slathers of big cars that were stalled in the rut; every few miles I had to pull out of the pair of ditches supposed to be wheel tracks to skitter around these stalled strings of heavy touring buses. Even at that I was better off than they were, for I could slide ahead a little anyhow, whereas the drivers and occupants of the mired big cars could only sit back and grit their teeth like folks that have abandoned all hope.

I had pulled around a dozen of these strings of stalled cars when, near the end of the worst of this Waycross stretch, I came upon the last bunch of bogged ones that I encountered. This string comprised nine big ships squatting dead in the pair of parallel ditches. I gathered from the man driving the rear-end car of this lot that a pair of mules were on the way to pull the front car of the bunch, which was hung up from engine trouble, out of the marsh ruts. My old flivver was teetering and tumble-bugging past this dead front car, and I was about to give that car's driver the hello and offer my services toward making his motor behave, when something swift and swirly happened to change my mind about that.

First there was a hoarse yip-yap from the dead limousine. Then the big white bow-legged bulldog in that car, that had caught sight of my mutt lying blinking about his

business atop of the bedding in my common old boat, shot like a bullet out of the closed car's lowered door window into the mud, and from the mud leaped on the running board of my flivver, double-dog-daring my mongrel to step down out of that.

I'll say for my dog that this challenge was instantly accepted. I'll say for him, too—and there are about forty widely scattered folks in this country, then the occupants of all those stalled cars, to verify me—that in something less than two minutes my mutt Jerry had made a firm, not to say a fanatical, believer of that pedigreed bulldog. Jerry, a thirty-five-pound scrub with a lot of hound dog and all other known strains mingled in him, had not been battling for mere life around the streets of Detroit before wandering one day into my shop and adopting me as his man, to let, especially now when he was on his way to Florida and warmth and comfort, any luxurious limousine bulldog tell him where he headed in or got off. So Jerry, from the instant the hot mix in the mud began, showed this lofty-lineaged bowwow from a twelve-thousand-dollar bus how to take a you-lose joke; so much so that it required all the shoe leather I had to kick Jerry off that disillusioned bench bulldog and throw him back into my car. The door of the limousine had been opened for the bulldog, and he scrambled, suffering from vertigo and things, back into his own bus, licked to a lisp.

"Serves him dam' good and right," the driver of that car, sitting alone in it at the wheel, said out of the window to me. "The fool's been shooting out of the car, looking for trouble, ever since he started south. Maybe now, when that gnawed-up left foreleg of his heals some, he'll turn Christian."

He looked like what we used to think a United States senator ought to look like, before they became minnows. Big-faced, smooth-faced, iron-faced old man, with a great mop of white hair showing under the wide-brimmed black slouch hat pushed back on his head. He was leaning back in the driver's seat, his overcoat collar pulled up around his neck, as if he expected to remain just there, in that posture, for the remainder of his life and didn't care a dang, and he was puffing on the longest and thickest and blackest cigar I ever saw.

"They told me at the rear of this bogged line that your car's bucking on you, sir," said I.

"Yep," he replied, yawning kind of bored-like. "Starter's gone bad. I've touched the button a million times, and nothing happens. I don't know any more about the insides of a car than I do about the insides of a devil-fish. Do you?"

I told him I didn't know anything else, and his strong old face of quartz creased into a smile.

"Go to it, son," he said. "If you get me out of this dam' hole I'll forgive you for licking my five-thousand-dollar blue-ribbon dog with that nondescript animal you're hauling."

For a mechanic with the know about motor cars, it was what you'd call an æsthetic delight just to raise the silver hood of this raging beauty of an automobile. The car itself was a custom-made limousine, the last whispered word in luxurious up-to-the-minute fittings, and all I need say about the engine is that it was one of those hyphenated English motors with both names of the hyphenation beginning with an "R." Nothing worth mentioning ever *can* ail a motor like that, and the only blessed thing that ailed this one was that the carburetor, from being given about a thousand times too much gas when the engine had been needlessly stalled, was flooded. So I drained the carburetor with one wrist twist.

"Touch the starter button now, chief," I said to the old boy. He did, and the motor purred to life like a waking tiger. The white-maned old-timer laughed and lit another of those insomnia perfectos from the end of the old one.

"Devilish simple for a fellow who knows," said he. "Look here, young man," he broke out then, "I'll make it worth your while—yes, and quadruple the bet—if you'll take off my hands the job of driving this confounded car the rest of the way. I bit off more than I can chew and I'm sick of it. Always presuming," with a glance at my wife, "that the little lady knows how to drive your car."

I told him she was a better driver than I'd ever be, which was the truth, and asked him where he was bound.

"Place I've got near Daytona," said he.

"That's me, too, chief," said I with the customary grin over "my place in Florida. "I'm bound for a place I've got somewhere near Daytona that I've never seen yet, thirty-acre parcel, as the lawyer man called it, that an old crab of a Montreal uncle of

mine has wished on me, probably by way of a sardonic joke."

"'Zat so?" inquired Old-Timer, little interested, it appeared, in my Florida parcel. "Well, since you're headed my way, there's no reason why you shouldn't pick up a dollar a mile for driving me the hundred and fifty and odd miles between here and Daytona, is there?"

A hundred and fifty being just fifty dollars more than I had on me at this stage of my travels, there was no such reason, believe me! I stepped over to Bill and explained things to her, and she took the driver's seat of our flivver and nodded me on my way. Old-Timer spread his great bulk over the rear seat of his car alongside the repentant bulldog, and I took his wheel, got out of the hole the big bus had sunk into by backing a few feet, and we were off, with Bill in the flivver grabbing the place right behind me and the stalled cars, their drivers uttering more than three of those rousing cheers, stringing after us.

It was while I was weaving this powerful perfect gentleman of a car through the final few miles of that morass between Waycross and Jacksonville that the owner of the bus told me how it happened that he himself, "worse than no driver at all," as he phrased it, had been driving it over the roughest roads in the South. His chauffeur, a Frenchman who'd been with him for fifteen years, had been ailing when they left the North, and at Washington the man had to be put in a hospital, having gone helpless from the Spanish flu.

"Only the mercy of Heaven, which seems to be a mantle that shields the cussed as well as the worthy, has kept me from turning turtle in the ten thousand ditches that I've missed by a quarter of an inch between Washington and this swamp path," said the game old scout. "The job has furnished a little more excitement than a man who'll be seventy-two if he lives till next Tuesday, and whose arteries may be beginning to harden slightly, really ought to experience."

By way, I suppose, of softening up his arteries a bit, he then produced from one of his bags a morocco-bound solid-gold pint flask, and, after offering me a drink which I had to decline for fear Bill might see me from the flivver close behind, he took from it a healthy swig of the kind of cognac that makes a room or a closed car smell like a garden of flowers on a dewy morning, only better; and then, in order to give his arteries a still better chance, this hale old party inserted another one of those ten-inch coal-black Havana torches in his face and blew huge billows of Vuelta Abajo smoke at his bulldog.

It wasn't till late that afternoon, when, after a swift run over the fair road from Jacksonville south, we were approaching Ormonde, that Old-Timer showed that he had a memory besides some helpful habits for aging arteries.

"Close to Daytona," said he then. "What's this you were telling me about a place near Daytona that somebody or other—a crab uncle, I think you said—had wished on you? Have you any idea where the place is?"

No idea on earth, I told him. But I had the deed to the parcel in my pocket.

"This paper," said I, handing the deed to him, "professes to give the location of the place, but it's all Greek to me, with it's section this, township that, range so-and-so, and all that."

He shucked open the blue-bound deed, peered at the opening paragraph for a moment through his eyeglasses, and then chuckled softly.

"Somebody, I believe, has beaten me to it in saying that this is a small world," said he. "But that doesn't make the observation any the less true. We're next-door neighbors, my young friend. Your thirty lies right alongside my hundred."

I was far from objecting to that, if he didn't. Anybody could see he was the kind of a man who would make a good neighbor.

"But you're not expecting to live in the shack on this place of yours—to take your wife there?" he asked me then, his heavy old Daniel Webster brows beetling.

"Why not?" I asked him. "It'll keep the weather out, won't it?"

"No," he chopped, "it won't. Not by a dam' sight will it. The hut on this place of yours is falling apart. It hasn't been lived in for years. It's now only a hovel for rats and bats, not for human beings. What d'ye expect to do with your piece of land, anyhow? Farm it?"

"I don't know yet what I'm going to do with it, chief," I told him. "It's the first piece of land I ever owned, and I've got to look it over first. Speaking for myself, I'm a bus tinker, and no farmer. But the wife, a farm girl, knows farming backwards.

She's crazy to get on this piece of land—hopes to raise chickens and spinach and such like."

"You'd better warn her in advance then, son, if you don't want her to be disappointed too grievously," Old-Timer said to me, glancing out of the car's back window to see if Bill was still trailing us, which she was, a hundred yards back, "that a sight of work, and work of a kind that no woman can do, will have to be put on this thirty of yours before anything can be grown there. Man, it's jungle! It was cultivated once, I understand, or part of it was; but now it literally has reverted to jungle land."

"The lawyer man," said I, catching myself gulping a bit on Bill's account, "mentioned something about part of it being an orange and grapefruit grove."

"Lad," broke out the white-maned, ruddy old man, "you'll know more about lawyers and their words when you're older. I've been over that thirty of yours—thought once of adding it to my place and making a golf links of it. Orange and grapefruit grove, eh? The orange and grapefruit trees on your place have been through all the Florida freezes for thirty years, with never a smoke pot to shield them. There's never been a spade thrust under the soil they grow in, nor a weed plucked from the soil, I should judge, in all that time. So that now your orange and grapefruit trees are mostly dead wood and long-spiked suckers, with never a piece of fruit on any of them within the memory of man."

There'd have been more of that, no doubt, though already there'd been more than enough, considering Bill's high hopes and the dashing they were in for, when Old-Timer, who'd been peering ahead as he talked, broke off suddenly to ask me to halt the car.

"There's a man ahead there beside the road that I know," said he, pointing to an old figure in grayish golf trousers and Madras shirt and a cap perched atop of the wiggiest-looking silvery-brown wig I ever saw. I pulled the car, throttled to nothing, alongside this golfing old gentleman. We had come into the asphalt road that runs through the Ormonde golf links, and the old golfer, now finished with his game, and surrounded by caddies and attendants of all sorts, was just about to get into a car that had drawn up for him on the other side of the road.

"'Lo, John," said my Old-Timer, reaching a hand out of a rear window. "How be ye?"

The old golfer turned slowly and peered at this familiar mentioner of his first name. Then his old, old face creased into that quiet—well, yes, and cunning, too—that quiet, cunning smile we've been seeing pictures of all these years. There's hardly a person in America, I suppose, who wouldn't have identified him instantly from his pictures. He was John D. all right.

"Well, well—my old Cleveland associate! —howdy do, howdy do?" said he, stepping right briskly for a man of his years to the car's side, and shaking hands heartier than I'd ever have expected of him with my passenger.

"John," said my old man, rolling one of those dumb-bell smokes around in his mouth, "it's a wonder you wouldn't buy yourself a new cap."

"Well, I would," said the old golfer, feeling of the cap, which wasn't any too new at that, "if the times weren't so hard. I find I have to be very careful. I was thinking some of having the plumbing improved a little at my place here in Ormonde, but the money's giving out."

The two old buddies had their chuckle over that. Then said my old man:

"Be dropping in on you, John, in a day or so, if you'll promise to have a drink for me on your sideboard."

A drink from John D.! It looked to me as if the suggester of such a thing was taking an awful chance. But I'm never right.

"I'll promise, if that's all that'll keep you away," said John D., a thousand up-curves in his cagey old smile. "You know I always have two of my best Guernseys shipped down here from Pocantico, and their milk just now——"

My Old-Timer, laughing, waved at me to start the car, leaving the richest man in the world, who I noticed could take care of himself in a little back-and-forth chirp, with the last word.

"My old Cleveland associate" chuckled a good deal to himself until we were crossing the concrete bridge from Daytona Beach to Daytona, and then, without ever mentioning the name of the man to whom he was referring, he said to me:

"I've known that old golfer all my life; worked for him for wages as a young man, was later a sort of partner of his in a small

way, and still later fought him. He imagines he gets something out of life, I suppose, on his diet of graham wafers and milk. He's already about ten years older than I am, and he may outlive me at that. But I'll bet a crab apple to a cookie that I've had more fun in any one year of my life than he has had in all of his eighty."

Whereupon, just to show that he still approved of his own longevity system, he took another protracted pull from the gold flask containing the artery medicine and lit another murderous cigar.

The sun had set, and a big, soft-glowing moon was gilding the wavelets of this blue Halifax that I'd first heard about during a Detroit sleet storm, when, a certain number of miles on the Dixie Highway out of Daytona, Old-Timer, once more looking rearward to see if Bill still was trailing, which, of course, she was, sang out:

"Easy does it, engineer. Get the feel of Florida on your feet and some of its sand in your shoes. For, once you get the sand of Florida in your shoes, you'll always come back."

A negro opened the wide gate in front of which I stopped, as ordered, and I drew the car over a wonderful shell road through a great garden ablaze with oleander and hibiscus and poinsettia and roses to the front steps of a noble Georgian house painted in old ivory with the window frames the color of turquoise. Every window in the big house was alight and a dozen negro servants surrounded the car to dance attendance on the old man with the teak-strong face. Before getting out he thrust something crackly, which I afterward found to be two one-hundred-dollar bills, into my coat.

"Better bide here with the wife for tonight, anyhow," he said to me as I headed the car for the garage. "You can't sleep in that shack next door as it is now; the rats'll eat the pair of you alive."

I ducked the invitation, his big house and array of black servants looking altogether too rich for my blood, and, putting the car away, found Bill waiting outside the gate in the flivver, Jerry on the seat beside her, having his head stroked.

We made the best of our way through the jungle of the all but impenetrable palmetto scrub of "my place in Florida" till, in a little clearing, we came upon the small one-story house standing in ruins, with the roof fallen in, in the moonlight.

Bill and I and Jerry had slept in the flivver of nights all the way from Michigan to Florida, and we slept in it again that night.

III.

We slept in the flivver, in fact, for many weeks of nights, our meals being got by Bill in the open on a rust-eaten cookstove which I found in the kitchen of my house "somewhat in disrepair," as the twinkly eyed lawyer man had expressed it.

I found a lot of strips of galvanized iron around an ancient cane-syrup mill at the back of the shack, and of this galvanized iron I built me a little workship close to the front gate of my "grove" on the Dixie Highway. My sign, "Cars Repaired," tacked to a palmetto, drew me enough work to keep me busy eight hours a day. Being a sort of carpenter as well as a bus tinker, I put in four other hours of each day, Sundays included, in patching up—in rebuilding, in fact—the weather-decayed house for which I held the deed. Bill helped me, and Jerry did the heavy sitting around, blinking, and barking.

Things weren't so bad. We were happier than we'd been for years. The soil was there all right, and fine soil, too, under our thirty acres of scrub palmetto and scrub oak and scrub cedar and scrub everything else that makes a jungle. It would take a long time to clear it. But Bill saw the possibilities of the place, and she got me enthused, and so I resolved that our jungle would be cleared if there were enough axes and grub hoes in the world to enable me to clear it. The orange and grapefruit trees, as my old next-door neighbor had told me on the ride south, were nothing but dead wood and suckers, and would have to come down. But new orange and grapefruit trees could be set out on the cleared ground. Our old neighbor had acre upon acre of magnificent citrus fruit trees on his land, the same kind of land as ours, so we could have 'em, too, in time. Bill built a chicken run at the end of the second week out of some wire she dickered for down the road a piece, got hold of half a dozen broody hens, set 'em on guaranteed-fertile eggs that she raised somewhere in the neighborhood, and was in business. I never knew a woman who loved so much to fool around in the open as Bill did—and does.

Nope. Things weren't bad at all. They

were pretty good in fact. We were getting by. And this country we found ourselves in was beautiful beyond all of the pipe dreams, as I'd supposed they were, I'd ever seen in print about it. The old boy who'd given me the deed to the place, whom Bill still maintained had been none other than my uncle Richard himself, had shown himself the possessor of a pretty good imagination in his description of our place, for all his precise way of speaking. But that was all right, too. From the very start Bill and I—yes, and Jerry!—got a bad case of Florida-sand-in-our-shoes, and we loved it from the first hour—if only for the sleet we'd escaped.

My old neighbor, friendlylike, got into the habit of crossing from his Scotch-gardener-kept lawn to my jungle mornings and afternoons and, squatting on a stump and with one of those assassinous cigars always rolling in his face, watching me work at bus-tinkering and carpentering. He seemed to be particularly interested in the way I was fixing up the house.

"You're changing it around—putting handy doors in here and there—aren't you?" he said to me one day while I hammered away. "Devilishly badly arranged shanty before you tackled it. Man that built it must have been nearly as good a carpenter as I am."

"The man who built it, I've been informed, was the grouchy old uncle of mine who gave me this property," said I.

"He must have had it in for you to send you and your wife down here to such a ruin," said Old-Timer. "What d'ye s'pose the old scoundrel had in the back of his mind in doing that?"

"Search me, chief," said I. "But if he meant to break our little hearts, he's fooled. We're in love with it, and we're going to make a regular place of it."

On Christmas Day our kind old neighbor, seeing Bill making preparations to cook our Christmas feed on the rusty open-air stove, rampaged over to our place and demanded that we take our Christmas dinner with him. He wouldn't take No for an answer, so we followed orders. I hope I behaved pretty at that scene of sumptuosity. I know that I had enough to eat and Bill saw to it that I didn't have too much to drink. After dinner he took us driving out Tomoka way in the big limousine, his French chauffeur, who'd come down from Washington all well of the flu, doing the driving.

"Well, good-by for a while, young folks," Old-Timer said to us, shaking hands, when we got back from that Christmas Day drive. "I'm called away. Won't be back here till next Winter. Hope you'll be here, you two, and all skeegy and comfortable, when I return to Florida. I've enjoyed your company."

He stood beside the big car, head bared and the moonlight gleaming on his heavy old silver mane, looking after us sort of meditatively as we passed into our jungle yard. We missed him the next day and for many days. A man full of character and a very human old boy, he'd become sort of endeared, as you highbrows would put it, to Bill and me on his many neighborly visits to our place.

One forenoon, just a week later, Bill, puttering around her chicken run, suddenly shaded her eyes from the sunshine. "Look!" she called out to me. I, from my workshop, followed the direction of her point. A dapperly dignified, elderly man with snow-white side whiskers, but wearing a Shantung suit this time instead of being swaddled in a fur-lined overcoat, and with a silk cap to match his suit instead of a sleet-impervious silk dicer, was walking down the steps of our absent old neighbor's Georgian mansion.

"Your uncle Richard, that pretended to be only his solicitor!" panted Bill, hurrying over to my shop. "Now you'll find that I was right! I felt perfectly certain that he'd appear down this way sooner or later to see what you were doing with this property he gave you!"

It looked sort of plausible at that, considered, anyhow, from the movie angle. Moreover, I hadn't lived for nearly thirty years without having heard of the infallibility of the thing called feminine intuition. So I took mine out in mumbling, "Mebbe you're right, after all, young feller," and waited for the reel to uncoil.

The elderly party in the Shantung suit saw us from the Georgian steps. He waved at us. We waved back at him. He sauntered down the coquina-shell paths between the poinsettias and roses and other blossoming things, made his way into our jungle, which was now by way of getting itself cleared a little, and greeted both of us with the greatest cordiality, giving each of us his two hands. Then he sat down on the stump of a palmetto and beamed benignantly dignified upon us. Bill, watching his face,

was, I knew perfectly well, comparing the color of his eyes and his cheeks and things with my mother's.

"I have clients, you'll have been thinking, in widely separated sections," said he in his word choosing but genial way of speaking. "My old friend, your next-door neighbor, was good enough, on being called away, to tender me the use of his Florida home here for the rest of the winter. He's on his way to Roumania, there to carry on his endless oil warfare against his old associate and good friend, Mr. Rockefeller. So I have the use of his exquisite place here, and the society of his excellent neighbors."

Smooth? I'll say he was a smooth old lad. Yet a man can be both smooth and agreeable, and this one was both.

"You two young folks," he went on, "seemed to have made a very pronounced impression on my old friend. He spoke to me in New York, the day before he sailed, of what he called the pluck—or was it the grit?—you both had shown in attacking the really difficult problem you found confronting you when you arrived here."

"This, of course, was no spot for Bill or me to sift in any remarks. So we went on listening.

"He took such a very great liking to both of you, in fact," our visitor went on, "that he authorized me to request that you permit him, as one well able to afford the expenditure, to do certain things in your interest. First of all, he has instructed me to obtain your permission to put a force of men on your piece of land to clear it thoroughly. I won't undertake to say"—the old lad smiled at this idea of his—"that his purpose in this is or is not to have your bit of land made a better match for his own tract. Additionally, he authorized me to ask your consent to have the plans drawn at once for a much larger and a much better house to be built on your place at his expense."

Imagine for yourself, if you're pretty good at that work, how hopelessly Bill and I were dragging at our anchors by this time. I declare that even Jerry, scratching himself under a bush within listening distance, wore a puzzled expression of countenance.

"As for yourself," the old scout in the Shantung rig addressed me in particular, "his idea is that, since you seem to be infatuated with the motor-car business, you're entitled to be engaged in that business on a more befitting scale. He believes that, if you look around a bit, you might be able to come upon a suitable establishment, where you could carry on a general garage business, that could be purchased, say, for fifteen or twenty thousand dollars, an outlay which I am authorized to make in your interest at any time. I am charged also with the task of obtaining for you the agency for some good car in this section."

Bill and I continued to gaze at him open-mouthed, and the old boy, who it was plain was enjoying himself keenly, of course understood our open-mouthedness.

"The surprise with which you seem to receive my statement of the plans my client has made in your interest," he went on, still addressing me particularly, "will be less marked, I think, when I inform you that my client, as a quite young man, worked side by side with your father in an oil-refinery in Cleveland."

I could get so much of this as that my father really had worked in a Cleveland oil-refinery as a quite young man, but no more.

"That in itself," the old lad continued, "would constitute, you no doubt suppose, a small enough reason for my client being impelled to do these things, and many other things which I shall touch upon later, in your interest. But there is something more. A certain incident happened during the comradeship in the oil-refinery of your father and my client. The two young men, it appears, quarreled, being rivals for the affections of a young woman. The quarrel reached a point where they battled it out with their bare fists. My client, to employ his own words, took the one thorough trouncing of his life in that battle. Yet he was not wholly vanquished. He lost the fight, but he won the girl. He married the girl, and she died many years ago without issue. Your father, the winner of the fight but the loser of the girl he fought for, nevertheless had the luck later to win the very superior woman who later became your mother, and who was, of course, the sister of my client."

The old lad, you could see, dearly loved to stun a man still harder when he had him groggy. Seeing me utterly wordless and gaping, he added with his grave old smile:

"So now, perhaps, it will be clear to you why your uncle Richard, who has charged me with the performance of so many agreeable tasks in your and your wife's interest—it will be clear to you why your uncle Richard, an extremely human man, as you no

doubt have found him, could not reasonably have been expected to show any inordinate amount of enthusiasm when his sister, your mother, who no doubt never heard of the fight, married the man who, as your uncle also expressed it on a very recent occasion, had licked the everlasting daylights out of him?"

A man, in his conjugal intercourse, has so few gloats a-coming that I simply had to wake Bill up late that night to spring my little gloat. She may have been only pretending to be asleep, but anyhow I turned the gloat loose.

"Great thing, this feminine intuition stuff," said I. "You're some picker of uncle Richards, Bill, I'll say—haw-haw-haw!"

But if they're not there with an alibi, which they generally are, they've always got something just as good.

"That's right, go ahead and laugh like a hyena in the middle of the night," said Bill. "Anyhow," she tacked to that, "I'd like to know which is the movier, seeing you're always throwing the movies up to me—which is the movier, anyhow, the nice old man who visited us to-day *not* being your uncle Richard, or the other nice old man, that we were right alongside of for more than a month and never knew from Adam, *being* your uncle Richard—which is the movier, tell me *that!*"

More of Cullen coming.

A FALLIBLE TEST OF EFFICIENCY

THE requiring of women registering as voters before elections to state their age orally when woman suffrage becomes universal will bring up a question that is very old. Women and even men, as a rule, after reaching maturity, are inclined to reticence regarding their ages and, in the case of women seeking employment, the main reason is that the younger they appear, the better their chances.

While registering in one of the largest cities of the United States—where there are many women voters and where woman suffrage started early—as voters at a State election, most of the women told their ages with reluctance. A woman in one district wrote, after she had registered, to one of the local daily newspapers complaining of being asked to declare her age and saying that she would never vote again, as she did not consider it right for women to be called upon to openly state their ages. Letters from other women voters followed, protesting against being required to state their exact ages openly. They held that this protest was not a woman's vagary, but that the ages of women, when known, have a good deal to do with their future career. Many employers still object to employing women over a certain age. In the words of an old saying, a woman is as old as she looks and her working capacity over forty is sometimes more than that of many women half that age.

Some age more quickly than others, and this applies to men as well as women. For many years employers in different industries were against employing men after they had reached or passed middle age, especially in trades requiring strength and activity, such as those of stone masons, bricklayers, or carpenters. Men in these trades, as active mentally and physically as when they were twenty-one, but whose hair became gray prematurely, in many cases have dyed their hair first when seeking work in order to secure employment. This illogical feeling against employing men over a certain age was at its height when Doctor Osler made his famous statement to the effect that a man's best work is done before he reaches forty.

Since then there has been a reaction. A competent man of fifty, who is long past the frivolous age of youth, has the experience of many years and is more desired now by many employers than an inexperienced young man. In these days men learn all the time, and a mason or carpenter forty or fifty or even more years of age can often do more and better work than men of twenty or twenty-five.

The old idea of discriminating against men who have passed their fortieth or forty-fifth birthday has lost its grip. Employers everywhere are waking up to the fact that mere age is a fallible test of efficiency and that some men over fifty are better workers than most men twenty-five years younger, or inexperienced youths.

Liquidated Damages

By Arthur Crabb

Author of "An Old Time Principle," Etc.

This is a timely building story. It is of unique interest. When you read it pay close attention to the lease made between Isidor and his tenants.

MORE people pass the corner of Elm and Main Streets every day than pass any other point in Alden, or for that matter any point in the United States, except two or three in New York and Chicago. On Main Street, wide and smooth, there is a constant stream of automobiles four deep, and people walking east or west always choose Main Street because of its broad sidewalks and perhaps because they like crowds. Elm Street is the main artery to the shopping district and clustered about the corner are almost all of Alden's largest hotels, banks, and office buildings. On one corner is the marble building of the People's Trust Company, on another the huge Wentworth Building, on a third the Alden Saving Bank's building and on the fourth is the thirty-story building of the Central National Bank.

Once upon a time there stood on that fourth corner a six-story building belonging to the post-office department of the United States of America. Some fifteen years ago the building became entirely inadequate for the purposes of the government, and in due course the post office took up its abode in modern and more commodious quarters. The building it left was a massive and somber pile; it seemed as though the architect had designed it with the view of discovering how much granite and masonry he could crowd on the lot and still leave a little space in which to work. The walls were many feet thick, many of its granite blocks weighed a dozen tons apiece, its windows were narrow, and had reveals so deep as to suggest the slits in medieval walls through which unhappy mortals caught their last glimpses of the outer world. Truly the old building was a monstrosity in modern eyes.

The government promptly sold the building to Isidor Klein, Izzy being an extremely wealthy and able gentleman who took flyers in real estate. He had no expectation of reselling the property quickly and accordingly spent a few dollars on the old building, making it available for stores on the first floor and offices above. Isidor had no time for dickering—he rented the stores at rates that were high even considering their location, and he took what he could get for the offices, which was very little.

It would be well to note that Isidor in making his leases said to his prospective tenants: "The rent is so much, the term one year, and then from year to year, at the same price for ten years—unless I sell; then, naturally, so far as I am concerned, the lease expires at the end of the current year; but this I promise and will, of course, put in writing that no one else shall have your space for ten years unless I sell. No—I will do nothing with the property more than I have done; any improvements you wish you must make yourself—you may do anything you like provided you do not bring down the building about our ears. Also, whatever you put in, and can take away, shall remain your property."

In moved a cigar store, a drug store, a quick-lunch restaurant, a barber, two haberdashers, a clothing store, and a gin mill, and all of them flourished mightily and stayed on, as chance would have it, for exactly ten years, having in the meanwhile added, bit by bit, to their furniture, fixtures, and equipment.

Then along came the Central National Bank and bought the property for a fabulous sum and announced that it would build a building on the site, the first floor of which would house its banking rooms.

The bank employed Mr. Alfred Taylor to prepare its plans, and in due course a beautiful picture of the proposed building appeared in the bank's window. The choice of an architect and what followed may or

may not be related to the fact that Alfred Taylor was a son-in-law of Isaac Comfort, president of the Central National Bank. Mr. Taylor was a young man of considerable education and excellent position in society; he dressed carefully, his manners were beyond criticism, and his general conduct exemplary. In fact, he lacked nothing but experience in matters architectural—and no young man can be blamed for that.

The plans were completed in November, and it was proposed to commence construction on April first. In this case, "to commence construction" meant "to commence destruction," for, of course, the old building must be torn down and carted away.

It is wise, when no time will be lost, to include the wrecking of the old building in the contract for the construction of the new, and in this case no time would have been lost, for the plans were all ready for taking bids. But Mr. Taylor and the bank asked for bids separately, although David White did his best to convince them of the error of their ways. Mr. Comfort thought that they might save an honest penny by taking separate bids, and Mr. Comfort never for an instant lost sight of any honest penny that might be saved. David bid on both contracts and got the one for the new building—which was so large as to make the other sink into a highly minor detail; David's contract was for millions of dollars—his bid for the wrecking was fifteen thousand.

Mr. Comfort had, in the meantime, been vindicated, for Johnny Porter had bid five thousand dollars for the wrecking of the old post office. David and Johnny were friends and Johnny had done a lot of work for David. Johnny Porter's father had been a cellar digger and wrecker and good, straight Irishman; Johnny was a chip of the old block and inherited the business. Johnny had told David before the bids went in that he, David, had no business monkeying with the wrecking contract.

"It's an Irishman's job," he said. "You have to deal with all the crooks in the city, and they'll skin you alive unless you know 'em and their ways."

"All right," David had answered. "I know that as well as you do. I'll be satisfied to come out square or even to lose a little—I want to get the job done on time, and the digging started. We've got to get the new building inclosed before cold weather comes."

"And do me out of a job," Porter remonstrated.

"Oh, I guess we can take care of that, Johnny," David had said, laughing.

But Johnny Porter got the job at ten thousand dollars less than David's bid. The financial aspect of the work was something like this: It would cost say twenty thousand dollars to do the wrecking—which, less the five thousand dollars the bank was to pay, left fifteen thousand dollars' worth of material Johnny Porter must sell to come out even—whatever he sold over fifteen thousand dollars' worth would be profit, and the sale of the old material was where, according to Johnny, a rough Irishman was needed to deal with the junk and second-hand material dealers whom he affectionately referred to as crooks. Johnny would have to sell old iron beams, cast iron, wire, pipe, glass, window frames, doors, lighting and plumbing fixtures, the antiquated elevators, the old boilers and engines and generators, a bit of marble wainscot and Heaven knows what not. It surely would require a high degree of salesmanship to do it right.

Johnny told David that he had the contract at five thousand dollars and David shook his head. "I wish you luck, Johnny, but it looks to me like a losing price."

"Maybe, maybe," Johnny said, "but it's a cinch I'd never make anything on the job unless I got it." Which, in Johnny's philosophy, meant that people had to take chances in this world—they couldn't make money doing nothing. He went on "Business is rotten. I've got next to nothing to do, and I've forty horses eatin' their blamed heads off."

"All right, go to it. How much time have you got?" David asked.

"Forty-five working days—beginning the first of February. I'll be done April first."

"Any penalty?" David asked.

"Twenty dollars a day coming and going," Johnny answered, which meant that if he did the work in less than the allotted number of days the bank paid him twenty dollars for every day saved; likewise, Johnny would have to pay the bank a like amount for every day he was behind, not as a penalty, but as liquidated damages.

"There's the contract," Johnny said, and tossed it across David's table. David read it and tossed it back.

"All right, me boy—go to it; but if you

don't let me in on the first of April, friendship ceases and hell will pop."

"It's a cinch," Johnny said.

February approached, and, as usually happens when wrecking of old buildings is to be done, hell began to pop on schedule. Johnny, walking through the building that was soon to become his, noticed that a bronze tablet which had been fixed on the corridor wall had disappeared. Investigation proved that it had been desired by Mr. Isaac Comfort, president of the bank, as a memento or relic or something. Anyway Isaac had it.

"You'd think he'd say something about it, now, wouldn't you? If he's as poor as that I'd be glad to make him a present of it, but I hate to have it swiped on me."

The tablet was worth a few dollars to Johnny as old bronze, but the principle of the thing roused his Irish temper a bit, and he was in a fine state of mind to start something if given half a chance.

Johnny was given the chance, for within a day he saw coming out of the barber shop and into the street where a truck was waiting for them, certain mirrors which had been firmly attached to the barber-shop wall; close behind were barber chairs, some glass shelves, three or four lavatories, a lot of lighting fixtures and various and sundry items of woodwork.

"Here, where you going with that stuff?" asked Johnny.

The Italian proprietor of the shop wondered who Johnny was—and what business it was of his, whoever he might be. Johnny explained explicitly and forcibly, and Tony countered with the perfectly true statement that the stuff was his, that he could prove it by the terms of his lease with Isidor Klein, and that the bank couldn't buy from Mr. Klein something that Mr. Klein didn't own nor sell to John Porter something that didn't belong to the bank, and so on and on, ad lib.

It was quite apparent from Tony the barber's attitude that he was not trying to commit grand larceny and was undoubtedly guiltless and acting within his rights—and that being so, Johnny must look to the bank for redress for, nothing having been said or written to the contrary, substantially all the fixtures being carted off by Tony were part and parcel of the building itself and, therefore, to be salvaged by Johnny.

Mr. Porter got busy; he telephoned to his office and two young men arrived promptly and began listing the articles which, one by one, appeared from the shop. Then Johnny saw the architect, Mr. Taylor, and explained matters. Mr. Taylor knew very little about it but promised to take it up with the bank. Being in no way connected with art and nothing more than an annoyance at best, he evaded the issue by referring it a few days later to the bank's building committee.

In the meantime the exodus from the old post-office building had begun in earnest, and surely as the Arab folded his tent and stole away leaving no trace, so did those tenants mean to leave no trace. When they were gone there were left behind only bare walls and floors and ceilings. The clothing man took away even a gallery he had built, with the stairs up to it, the iron railing and the brass hand rail; the cigar store walked off with the marble tile from its floor; the clothing store tore down its mahogany wainscot and show windows—every tenant took his revolving doors and fixtures. The cream of the whole building was skimmed completely off.

Johnny sent to the bank a list of what had been taken and opposite each item he placed a price which was highly complimentary to the item's self-esteem. Johnny foresaw a compromise and thought it wise to have said compromise based on a high valuation rather than a low one. That is a custom in the trade, gentle reader; a contractor asks much more than he will be satisfied with, lowers his demands with apparent reluctance, finally an agreement is reached and every one is satisfied, the party of the second part, be he owner or architect, glorying in his ability to cut something of the other fellow's bill.

In due course the bank, per Isaac Comfort, denied its liability; it admitted that it had not advised the bidders specifically that certain fixtures and fittings which ordinarily become the property of the wrecker were in this case the property of others than the bank and, therefore, not the bank's to dispose of, but this was covered by the description of the building in the contract, where it was written that the contractor was to remove, et cetera, the structure and such fittings and fixtures contained therein as were part of it and the property of the Central National Bank.

Johnny remonstrated, but Father-in-law

Isaac had his eye on the penny that might be saved, and son-in-law architect looked annoyed and said in a reverent whisper that it would never do to antagonize Mr. Comfort, that it would be most deplorable and very bad business to make trouble over such a small matter. Johnny suggested that it might be a small matter to the bank, but wasn't to him, and that he would accept no such decision—whereupon Mr. Comfort opined that they would have to leave it to the architect to settle, he being designated the judge and arbitrator between the owner and contractor in all questions arising under the contract.

That is a customary stipulation, though the law frowns on it, the court and its lawyers wanting to have a hand in any healthy scrap that may be going. By and large, it is a grand stipulation, especially from the owner's point of view: in this case the architect was the owner's son-in-law and in all cases the owner hires the architect and pays him, and the architect is dependent upon the owner for his reputation and future business. Likewise, most questions that arise are due to some error or omission of the architect, in which case the guilty party tries his own case. It's a cinch for everybody but the contractor.

In the matter of Porter vs. The Central National Bank the architect-judge decided with much dignity and the twirling of the court's mustache that Johnny was to be stung, which left the plaintiff with the alternative of remaining stung or taking the case to a regular court, which is poor business at best. 'Tis a long, long life, a contractor's, like a married man's, and starting lawsuits isn't a good business, however just the cause; a man's reputation is worth much, and his reputation is badly damaged, fairly or unfairly, if he appears much in court.

Johnny Porter cussed under his breath. Hard knocks he would take with a smile, but dirty tricks he had no heart for, and surely there had been dirty business here, for a white man would have said in black and white that those store fittings were not to go to the wrecker. Perhaps Johnny did not solemnly swear to get square with Isaac Comfort and his precious son-in-law, but it is fair to presume that Johnny hoped the chance would come, and, coming, would be taken advantage of.

February first had come by this time and with it a mob of junk dealers who paid cash to Johnny and took away everything movable and semimovable. While this was going on Johnny built a protection over the sidewalks on Elm and Main Streets, as required by law, so that innocent passers-by might not be inconvenienced by stray bricks or chunks of granite falling on their heads.

Nowadays, the city of Alden requires that such overhead bridges shall be neat and strong in design, painted dark green, and be kept free from advertising of all descriptions excepting only that the contractor may place two or three of his own signs thereon. But such was not the case then, and no sooner was the bridge completed than it was plastered, inside and out and from one end to the other, with multicolored cards and posters advertising certain theatrical productions. For this privilege the Alden Billposting Company paid Johnny five dollars per day, weekly in advance. It was a minor item of income, but every little helped, and Johnny was not interested one way or the other in how the corner of Elm and Main Streets looked, artistically.

The building stripped and bare, the real work of demolition commenced. Carpenters built rubbish chutes and laborers produced the rubbish; a half-hearted derrick operated by a hand winch went up and the roof began to come off and down; old men began to clean bricks with small hatchets; and trucks went in and out, and away with débris. Clouds of dust rose and were blown up and down the streets, into the eyes of innocent passers-by and into the windows and doors of near-by tenants. The usual howl went up, and Johnny reluctantly bought a couple of lengths of garden hose and played unimportant streams of water here and there from time to time.

Before very long Johnny knew that he was in for a bad time of it, and began to wonder whether David White hadn't been right when he said that Johnny was taking too long a chance in bidding so low for the work. The brick in the old building were soft and the mortar hard, and mighty few of the brick could be cleaned and sold to be reused, which meant that an unusual amount of rubbish had to be carted to the dump. The granite blocks were large and very hard and most of them had to be broken with sledges before they could be lowered to the trucks, and this consumed an enormous amount of labor. Besides that, they were anchored to the walls like grim

death and breaking loose those iron rods used up a lot more labor.

The farther the work went the worse it got, and Johnny knew that he was going to lose a barrel of money on top of what Isaac Comfort and his sky-terrier architect had trimmed him for. He went to David for advice, and David told him that it looked too late to change the method of doing the work.

"If I'd had it," David said, "I'd have put up two big derricks with engines on them, and I'd have done all the cutting with air hammers instead of by hand. I know it costs more on an ordinary job, but your old skate isn't an ordinary building."

That statement didn't help Johnny much. "Where would a poor cellar digger get all that equipment?" he asked.

"I'd have loaned it to you if you'd asked me—I'll do it yet if you think it will help you any—and get you out on April first."

"April first!" Johnny exclaimed. "It'll be nearer July first."

"You know what that means to me?"

"Certainly I know—but what can I do? I'm going broke anyway. You can make the bank pay you damages, can't you?"

The bank had agreed to deliver the premises to David on April first, with the old building removed, and if it failed to do so and David was damaged by its failure he could undoubtedly make them pay those damages. But it was the same old story—evade trouble, avoid fights with clients at all costs. Nothing hurts so much as paying out money for nothing, and that is what the bank would be doing if it paid David for the damage caused by Johnny Porter's delay.

"How about you?" David asked. "As I recall your contract, they can only soak you twenty dollars a day, no matter how long you take over your time."

"Yes—damn them!" The raw deal they had given Johnny rankled all day long and every day.

"And they can't throw you off the job and finish it themselves, charging the expense to you?"

"They cannot."

"It's lucky for you I didn't write the contract. You can stay on the job as long as you like, as I see it."

"Sure I can, at twenty dollars a day."

"Twenty dollars a day isn't much," David said.

"It's five hundred dollars a month, and with what I've lost already and what I'm going to lose and the money they stole off me on account of that store stuff, I'll be around asking you for a job as labor foreman before long."

"You will not—you'll pull through somehow." Then David, as though he were thinking aloud, said: "For some reason or other I can't help thinking twenty dollars a day penalty is mighty little—I'll do anything I can for you, Johnny."

For the life of him, Johnny didn't see that there was anything David could do for him—there was nothing for it but to take his medicine. Johnny went out and stood across the street and watched the work eat up his money. It would have been bad enough if he'd been working for white men, but it sure did hurt to go broke for the benefit of a bank that had all the money in the world, to go broke for an old skinflint like Isaac Comfort and a week-kneed little snob like Alfred Taylor.

Johnny leaned against the corner of the People's Trust Company building and gazed upward at his white elephant. It was down to the fourth floor and he had fifteen days left to get it down to the street level, before the twenty dollars a day began. Maybe by that time he wouldn't have twenty dollars. And then what?

Johnny's eyes fell to the protection over the sidewalk, the rough timber structure that was almost completely hidden by gaudy advertising, and he remembered that he was getting five dollars a day for the use of the bridge.

"That makes it fifteen," Johnny thought, and then he muttered to himself: "Twenty—fifteen—twenty less five is fifteen." A most curious expression came over Johnny's face, the kind of expression that might be expected if some one to Johnny unknown had just left him a million real dollars. He smiled and the smile faded, a frown took its place and the smile came back. Finally Johnny grinned—all alone on the corner—looked at his watch and dived up the street to a telephone booth. In a few minutes he returned to his corner and in a few minutes more he was joined by another man.

They talked for half an hour, and then the man went his way; Johnny went across the street to his white elephant and gave an order, short and to the point.

The next morning the old building was

strangely still. There was no sound of rubbish rumbling down chutes to trucks waiting below, no ringing of sledges against granite, no click-click of hatchets against the mortar on old brick; no dust rose in clouds from it, no man shouted orders or maledictions. It was as peaceful as the grave. A group of laborers who had stood about hoping for work had melted away, and Mike the watchman stood solitary guard at the barred entrance driveway.

The innocent passers-by, noting the condition, said "Strike," and let it go at that. Johnny Porter was nowhere to be found.

The day passed and on the following-morning strange trucks and strange men arrived on the scene and very soon there was a merry clatter of hammers and the biting of saws, tackle appeared on the wall tops, and before long it looked as though Johnny were building an inclosure about his old building to hide it from the eyes of the innocent passers-by. Johnny didn't go as far as that; before long the rough work stopped and panels began to appear on the bleak expanse of wood and sheet metal, and when those were finished there appeared in them, in many colors, young men smoking cigarettes, ladies using toilet preparations with remarkable success, automobile tires that would travel many miles, a bag of flour that even a young bride couldn't keep from baking properly, and so on and on through a long list. Two deep the advertisements were, and a hundred feet long on Elm Street and two hundred on Main, and they were cleverly illuminated at night by electricity.

There they stayed, calm and peaceful on the grim walls of the old post-office building, and behind them, inside, all was silent as a starry night in the country. Mike the watchman stood guard below all day long and Benny came on at six o'clock and did the night shift. The two of them got two-fifty each, making five dollars a day that Johnny had to pay, but as Johnny put it: "They've been with me for ten years and were with my father before me and are members of the family, as you might say, and I have to take care of them anyway. Besides, the advertising on the bridge takes care of their wages exactly."

That is how things stood when Johnny Porter's forty-five working days were up, which happened to fall on the first day of April—fifteen days having been taken out on account of Sundays and bad weather. On the forty-sixth day Johnny sent to Isaac Comfort a certified check for twenty dollars and demanded a receipt for it as covering the damages for a day's delay as stipulated in the contract. Johnny enjoyed the transaction to the full.

He drifted into language that was more forcible than elegant in telling David what he was doing to Isaac Comfort and that willy-boy son-in-law of his. Expurgated, Johnny spoke something like this: "They tried to be smart; they've got 'most all the money there is, and yet they had to try to get the few pennies I have—they were too smart—damn them—too smart by a whole lot—there's such a thing as being too wise. Now let 'em squirm."

David did a little figuring on a scrap of paper. "If they paid four million for the property, as they say, and I guess they did, the interest on the money is something like six hundred dollars a day," he said.

"Not counting taxes and water rents and what they have to pay you for holding you up," Johnny added.

"As I said before, it's lucky for you I didn't write your contract," David said. "I wouldn't have left a hole like that in it."

"I know well you wouldn't, and neither would you have slipped in the joker about that first-floor stuff—or if it had happened unknowing, you'd have made it right. Contracts are poor things anyway, somebody's always misunderstanding 'em—or sayin' they do."

David declined to argue that point, and Johnny talked baseball for a while and departed.

•

The bank's lawyer told Isaac Comfort what he thought of the contract for wrecking the old building.

"Who wrote it?" he asked.

"The architect," said Isaac.

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders. "What do you want me to do about it?"

"Find some way out of it for us."

"Some way out of it! There's only one way out of it—settle at the contractor's price. He can keep the property in his possession for a million years—and it would have been so easy to have written in the contract that, if at any time the contractor failed to proceed with the work in a proper manner, the owners should have the right to put him off the work and complete it them-

selves or employ others to do it. As it is, you can do nothing but take your twenty dollars a day and wait till he gets good and ready to finish it." The lawyer was John Bowers, a gentleman and a scholar.

"But he can't afford to pay twenty dollars a day indefinitely," Mr. Comfort exclaimed.

"I rather think he can," said Mr. Bowers.

That idea didn't increase Mr. Comfort's happiness at all. "Suppose we get Porter in and see what we can do with him," he suggested.

"The quicker the better," said the lawyer, and Mr. Comfort had Mr. Porter apprised of their wishes by telephone.

"Sure I'll come," said Johnny, and fifteen minutes later the negotiations were on. They dodged about the issue gracefully for a few minutes before they came to the point, as is the pleasant custom when a scrap is on, but finally they got to it and asked Johnny what he'd take to settle.

"Two hundred and twenty thousand dollars," said Johnny, solemn as an owl.

Mr. Comfort nearly had apoplexy then and there—his face became a glorious purple, his clenched hands trembled, the perspiration stood on his brow and he gasped.

"What! You're crazy!" he finally stammered.

Mr. Bowers smiled—it wasn't his money. "How do you arrive at that figure?" he asked.

"Well, it's like this," said Johnny calmly. "I'm paying the bank twenty dollars a day damages and I'm paying two watchman five. That makes twenty-five, which is all it's costing me except renewing my building permit once a month, which doesn't cost enough to count. On the other hand, I'm getting five dollars for the advertising rights on the sidewalk protection and fifty dollars a day for the signs on the building. That makes just——"

"Fifty dollars a day!" exclaimed Mr. Comfort.

"Why sure—that's the finest advertising space in the United States—bar none. That sort of space goes by circulation just like newspaper or magazine advertising. Maybe more people go by some corners than go by mine—but you can't advertise at those other corners."

"I see, I see," said Mr. Bowers.

"So, as I was saying, I get fifty-five dollars a day income and I spend twenty-five—making thirty dollars a day net and that's about eleven thousand dollars a year, and it would take two hundred and twenty thousand dollars at five per cent to bring me in that much. So far as I can see, that thirty a day is good as long as I live anyway, and I can live on that very comfortably, and the contract says something about heirs and assigns or something."

Mr. Comfort looked at his lawyer and the lawyer looked grimly at Mr. Comfort. Silence reigned till Johnny Porter broke it.

"There's another way of looking at it," he said. "I figure that the interest and taxes on the lot, not counting reputation and goodwill, stand you about seven hundred and fifty a day. If we settled on that basis I'd get something like five million, but it looks to me as though that would be blackmail or pretty near it, and I never had any heart for dirty business."

Again there was silence, this time broken by Mr. Bowers.

"Do you mean to stand on two hundred and twenty thousand dollars, Mr. Porter?" he asked.

"What would you do if you were me?"

"I'm not your lawyer," said Mr. Bowers, smiling.

"I know that—I wasn't talking law. What would you do, man to man?"

"Fair and square dealing pays in the long run," said Mr. Bowers.

"Now you're talking," said Johnny, and he drew a paper from his pocket and handed it to the lawyer. It was a copy of his bill for the things taken from the stores.

"Ask Mr. Comfort about that," Johnny said, "and then tell me what you'd do, man to man."

Johnny departed, leaving Mr. Bowers and Isaac Comfort to think things over.

What happened after that isn't important. John Bowers was more than a good lawyer, and he told Johnny, man to man, what he thought of the whole business—and Johnny grinned and said that Mr. Bowers was right and then Mr. Bowers made Johnny a proposition and Johnny grinned again—and the next morning the old post office woke up and the dust flew, and when it was all over Johnny Porter wasn't broke or anything like it. In fact, he began to think of a house with a lady at present calling herself Miss Katharine Brady in it—which is another story entirely.

"Action Stuff"

By Frederick J. Jackson

Author of "Classic Salvage," Etc.

Claim jumping is hardly a popular sport, but it is a profitable one if you can get away with it. When Billy McQuade heard that Thurston had pulled the trick on him he said: "That guy's got more nerve than an aching tooth, but I'm a dentist!"

IT was the open season for claim jumping, and Billy McQuade, as he smote a pick against a ledge of promising rock, chose to be cumbered with a heavy cartridge belt and one of Mr. Colt's pets. "Thirsty" Thurston, a specialist in his line, and Billy's dearest enemy, was reported to be in the vicinity. Therefore, Billy was wary. Examining a bit of ore through a prospector's magnifying glass, Billy drew in his breath with a whistling sound.

"By the skimpy garment of the seventh virgin!" he exclaimed, "if the vein keeps coming it'll make the dreams of this here guy, Avarice, look like a bad frost."

Hastily setting up his location notices, he gathered several more specimens and set out for the near-by desert town of Mohican. He arrived in town, left the ore with an assayer, and boarded the first train, to file his location notices at the land office.

Upon his return to Mohican he hastened to the assay office, and learned the best—also the worst. The ore was rich, but Thirsty Thurston had jumped the claim. He had seven men with him, Billy learned, seven gun-carrying hard customers.

"That guy's got more nerve than an aching tooth," was Billy's ominously quiet comment. "But I'm a dentist," he added. "And you're a blabbing fool," he continued to the assayer, then crossed the road to the livery stable to get his horse.

He rode out on the desert, but never reached his claim. At the southern end of Avocado Cañon he was stopped by a double barbed-wire fence and two armed guards. The fence, nine feet in height, was about one hundred and twenty in length, stretching across the mouth of the cañon and effectually barring further progress. There was no other way of reaching the claim, for the cañon lost itself in the impassable mazes of the San Madero Mountains.

With chilly eyes Mr. McQuade surveyed the fence and the guards; the lines around his usually humorous mouth tightened a little.

"Where's Thurston?" he demanded. "I want to see him."

"Yuh can't!" replied one of the guards.

"I can't see him? Why, you wall-eyed, sneaking son of deliberate misery, you send for Thurston right pronto or he'll put a flock of burs in your tail! Savvy!"

The guard hesitated, then turned and walked back some distance.

"Hey, Thurston," he yelled, "here's a guy belly-achin' around to see yuh! He's sure got the gift of gab, anyhow."

Thurston, heavy-footed, big of frame, big of jaw, pop-eyed, sun-reddened of face, and altogether sure of himself, came lumbering down to the fence.

"Oh, hello, McQuade," he called out, his tone deliberately casual, "anything I can do for you?"

"Any other way you can do me, you mean," corrected Billy.

"What are you driving at?"

"At you! You oversized, moss-headed spawn of a cracked oven! D'ye think you can get away with this raw deal? With *me?* Huh! You'd better vacate while the road is free of dust."

Mr. McQuade's right thumb was hooked carelessly into his gun belt, his fingers caressing the butt of the weapon. For a moment he contemplated arousing Thurston, by skillfully chosen insults, to draw a gun. Cheerfully would he have shot it out with him. But the two guards, with cocked Winchesters, ready to shoot from the hip—the odds were deadly.

"Speak softly, little one," grinned Thurston. "This is *my* claim. I've got my location notices up, and I've sent a man to register for me."

"My notice is already filed. You haven't a ghost of a show."

"The hell I haven't," drawled Thurston. "You've got the short end. You know the law in this region. Think it over! *I'm in possession!* I've got seven witnesses to swear that you had no papers up when I located here."

"You mean you've got seven good liars!"

"That'll be all from you! Drop your gun—quick!" ordered the claim jumper. "My men have you covered. You start anything and you'll wake up to find harps strumming all around!"

Billy snarled, but retained the discretion with which he was sometimes blessed. He tossed his gun over the fence, causing Thurston to dodge. Then he started back to Mohican.

The claim jumper stood watching him, his eyes serious. The quiet departure spoke volumes, and Thurston became uneasy, beginning to wonder if he were bouncing a stick of dynamite in jumping the claim of wily Billy McQuade. If Billy had indulged in another display of verbal pyrotechnics Thurston would not have worried. As it was, he hastened preparations for defense, and he was a specialist when it came to combating those who sought to take the law into their own hands.

Mr. McQuade, returning morosely to Mohican, bought two new six guns and spent the remainder of the afternoon in puncturing innocent tin cans in the rear of Milligan's Chop House, Milligan's back yard comprising some unfenced miles of desert. Satisfied at last with his target practice, he carefully oiled and reloaded the guns, then purchased a pair of wire nippers. Cogitating dourly, he seated himself on Milligan's front steps.

It was a habit of Mr. McQuade's, when a matter calling for action arose, to attempt to play a lone hand, especially so when it was a personal affair. If the odds proved too great he would reluctantly employ the assistance of others, make his schemes long-winded and finish them to a rich brown. Always he managed to inject considerable horse-play and humorous strategy into his plans, the keynote, if possible, hinging on his enemy's greatest weakness. As far as he knew, however, Thurston possessed no marked weakness. His capacity for liquor was not a weakness; it was a gift.

Billy's trend of thought was broken by the chop-house proprietor, who ambled out to lean against the doorway.

"They're comin' back," Milligan observed interestedly, gazing down the road. Billy looked and saw two stagecoaches and a carry-all approaching. Behind them plodded a motley assortment of townspeople.

"Who's coming back?" was Billy's apathetic inquiry.

"Why, that movin'-pitcher company. They been takin' pitchers out on the desert, an' hired most everybody in town—five dollars a day. You oughta been here; with them two guns an' that look screwed on your mug you mighta got ten."

"Aw, you make me sick!" grunted Billy. "Am I that kind of a piker?" He lapsed into disdainful and moody silence, maintaining a superior air of indifference when a dozen or more of the Mohican citizens, proudly allowing the make-up grease to remain on their faces, filed into Milligan's for supper. Bored, without interest, he listened to their lately acquired patter of the screen.

Then he perked up with attention, for Thurston rode into town. Billy instinctively reached for his gun, then thought the better of it, for Chris Harper, the town marshal, had a reputation as a bad hombre. Billy liked Chris and didn't want to spoil the reputation.

The claim jumper dismounted before the Grand Palace Hotel, almost directly across the river of dust which did duty as a street.

At that moment, a smartly attired girl, obviously one of the film players, issued forth from the lobby of the hostelry, dusted off a veranda chair, and languidly sat down. Idly she glanced for a scant moment in the direction of Thurston. The latter smiled, raised his hat and started toward her. But she turned stiffly away, yawning to exaggerate her indifference and contempt. Thurston's normally red face turned a shade darker; with his best assumed air of nonchalance he stalked toward the hotel bar.

"Um-m!" grinned Billy. "We live and learn. Amigo, she sure got your number."

Passed a few minutes. Then Thurston returned, strapped an obvious package behind his saddle, threw a hopeful but lost glance toward the veranda, then rode away. On Billy's face was a smile; in his mind a new idea.

But he had to try out a lone hand. Early that evening he rode out in the direction of Avocado Cañon. Early the next morning

he returned, bereft of both revolvers, his dignity, peace of mind, and a portion of his scalp, having successfully stopped the swinging butt of a six gun as he attempted to crawl beneath the wire. He was sadder and no wiser, for the cañon was impregnable. Thurston had set up a searchlight and a machine gun to guard the claim, and taken pains to show them to Billy. The latter saw that it would be suicidal to make a frontal attack. Then, too, times had changed, and the authorities had developed an annoying habit of attempting to hold some one responsible should bloodshed occur in settling a private affair.

"Strategy! That's the stuff!" cogitated Billy, holding his throbbing head. "Strategy!" And his thoughts turned to the woman who had snubbed Thurston on the previous afternoon. "Yes, sir, strategy!" His low spirits lifted a trifle. "I'll see Sam Benson. He's the boy who can grease the wheels for me."

Mr. Sam Benson, a retired mining man, and crony of Billy's, dwelt with his family in a rambling bungalow situated amid the foothills of Hollywood. He was surprised and delighted when Mr. McQuade rang his doorbell late the following afternoon.

"Billy, you old desert rat!" he howled joyously, "if this time you don't stay at least a week I'll disown you."

"No, Sam," said Billy sadly, "I can't stay a week. There's a fellow up in Avocado Cañon who's in trouble, and I've got to get busy."

"A friend of yours in trouble!" Sam's benign face clouded. "That's different. Anything I can do?"

"Hell! I never said he was a *friend!* But he's sure in trouble. *He jumped my claim!*"

Benson laughed, and led Billy toward the ice box.

"In trouble!" he repeated. "Gorgeous goldfish! I should say he is in trouble—if you haven't lost your grip."

"Yeh! But this bird, Thirsty Thurston, has a pull up there. I have to keep within the law—if I can. Which makes the sledding darned tough. But I've got a lulu of an idea. I reckon to get my claim back and to make Thurston's slippery soul wriggle quite a bunch." He related the incident of the woman on the hotel porch, illustrating what he hoped was Thurston's pet weakness.

"So you want to hire a first-class vampire?" laughed Sam. "I don't see how that will help you, but there's Benny Gibson, who lives across the road in that white bungalow. He's a motion-picture director. He's a good scout and a live wire, and he's got a sense of humor that's all wool and *too darned wide!* I'll fix it."

"He seems to be the guy I want." Billy cheered up perceptibly. "Well, Sam, happy days—and here's to the vamp!" He raised the glass Sam had filled.

II.

Mr. Benny Gibson did nothing less than cackle when Billy had outlined his scheme.

"Man!" he exclaimed, "this is rich! Great stuff! You want *him* to capture the claim for *you!* That's not a sense of humor; it's cruelty to animals. But it's plausible. It ought to work—if you've got Thurston sized up right."

"You bet I have. When a man has stayed up the desert for a long time, he's just about tame enough for anything classy with a skirt on it to make him jump through a hoop. The prettier the girl the farther he'll jump."

"That seems likely," agreed Benny, "and I know the very girl to put it over. She's a smooth worker—one of these peaches-and-cream blondes. She looks like a million dollars and accrued interest. A born vampire! In real life you will find—the screen notwithstanding—that it's the butter-won't-melt-in-her-mouth type of blonde who can get away with murder. And this Daphne Jewett is really deserving, too. She needs the work, for she's got a sick mother."

"What'll it cost?" inquired Billy. "Not that expense matters much, for I cleaned up handsome on a potash claim."

"Oh, she thinks she is lucky when she gets a hundred a week. There's not much doing in the game now, and she'll be tickled to get even a week's work at that figure."

"Huh! And her name is Daffy Jewett?"

"No," smiled Bennie, "even though she is in some ways. All blondes are—in my opinion. Her name is Daphne—not daffy."

"And she's got a sick mother on her hands?"

"Yes, that's one thing in her favor—she certainly thinks the world of her mother."

"That makes a hit with me," returned Billy. "She gets five hundred, if she puts it over on Thurston."

"She will—if any one can," promised Gibson. "She's a wonder!"

"What else will it cost me?"

"Nothing, except for your own men. You'll have to pick them up. In the picture I'm now working on we'll have to shoot a lot of desert stuff and we might as well go up to Mohican and do it. And the idea you've given me for a punchy story is worth the little time I'll give you to put your plan through."

Early the following morning, Billy rode into Los Angeles on a street car. In a North Main Street saloon he accidentally met an old friend, "Slivers" Cassidy. Cassidy, an erstwhile cow-puncher, had been working in motion pictures, but Western dramas calling for expert horsemen had passed into decline and he was out of a job. Slivers assisted Billy in combing the district. Soon they had assembled a dozen cowboys and hard-rock miners, men who could fight equally well with fists or firearms, men who were temporarily down on their luck and needed money.

Billy gave Slivers some advance money to distribute among the men, and then returned to Hollywood.

That evening he met Daphne Jewett, Bennie Gibson bringing her to Sam's bungalow for the introduction. To say that Billy fell in love at the first sight of the girl's perfect figure and entrancing face would be putting it mildly. The casualty was terrific. A second look at her peach-blossom complexion and into her limpid blue eyes and the work of devastation was complete.

When the details of the plan had been discussed she expressed a desire to return to her mother, explaining that she was alone. When working, Daphne invariably hired a nurse to take her place at home.

After she had taken her departure with Bennie Gibson, Billy turned to his friend.

"Golly, Sam!" he ejaculated, "ain't she a daisy? I didn't know they made them that way any more."

"They do—occasionally," grinned Sam, "but watch your step when you meet one."

On her part, Daphne turned to Bennie as he drove her home.

"I think Mr. McQuade is real nice," she commented. "I wonder if he has any money."

"Sam told me he made fifty thousand dollars in one deal last year," he replied absently, his mind on a picture.

The sun was still behind the Hollywood mountains the following morning when Slivers Cassidy sneaked furtively to the rear door of Benson's home and made inquiries of the cook concerning Billy McQuade.

Cassidy's tale of woe was long winded and picturesquely worded. Briefly, it was this. The night before, in order to keep the expense money in the family, as it were and prevent the tin horns from getting it, Billy's men had congregated in Cassidy's room to indulge in the national five-card pastime. Two games were going, one on the bed, the other on the floor. Came a knock and two policemen entered to arrest them for gambling, which was strictly under the ban in Los Angeles. But this raid was ill advised and in insufficient force. When the dust cleared away it found the two officers neatly bound, with pillow cases over their heads, and being used as convenient seats by the players who were dealing the cards on the floor. Toward morning, after Cassidy had won all the money in sight, the game broke up, and they began to figure how many compound crimps they had put in the law. The result scared them, and they had taken to the hills north of Hollywood.

Billy and Sam laughed, and agreed to send a truck to transport the men farther out of town when it again came dark. In the meantime, Cassidy was to smuggle tobacco and provisions to them.

Cassidy's mouth quirked humorously, one corner of it drawing up and the other down, as one hand dove into a trouser pocket and brought a shiny object to light. It was a large, ornate silver shield, which, up to some hours before, had been worn by a member of the Los Angeles police force.

"Got any use for this souvenir?" he inquired.

"Slivers, you'll wind up in jail one of these days," prophesied Billy, "but not while I'm conscious." A devilish grin answered Cassidy's. "I reckon this badge can make somebody do a lot of explaining—and that somebody ain't with us at present."

Later, when Cassidy had departed, Billy remarked thoughtfully: "D'ye s'pose I can have another talk with Miss Jewett? But I guess there ain't much chance, though, for it's back to Mohican to-night."

"Maybe I can fix it," replied Sam, then questioned shrewdly: "What do you want to see her about?"

"Business," said Billy soberly.

"You're a gol-darned liar!" was Sam's grinning retort.

III.

Billy McQuade finished putting up the last location notice on his new claim, wiped the fervent perspiration from his brow and cocked a protesting eye aloft at the desert sun.

"*Some* mining claim, this!" he disgustedly thought to himself. "If she assayed a cent and a half a ton I'd get excited. But a rotten claim can have a good purpose."

Followed three days, the greater part of which Mr. McQuade lounged in various saloons and extolled the virtues of his new property. This was intended to reach Thurston's ears—and did.

Then arrived twelve muscular strangers, who registered at the Grand Palace Hotel and loudly announced that they were motion-picture actors, the rest of the company being due to arrive the next day.

Immediately through the town ran a buzz of excitement. Citizens with no visible means of support and visions of a few days' work at five dollars per appeared. Cassidy discouraged them.

"Naw," he said, "notta chance! The extras spoiled the action for the last company that worked up here, so they're only goin' to use us experienced guys. And the Barstow accident sure put the finish on your chances. A funny accident, that. A lot of shootin' in the story, and we hired some Barstow gents for extras. They was supposed to use blank ca'tridges, but some one slipped a chunk of lead into Featherstone, our leadin' man. We're gun-shy!"

Billy, standing in the crowd, caught Cassidy's eye. The latter, according to instructions, showed not the slightest sign of recognition. Billy winked at him.

"Any pretty girls coming?" he inquired, raising his voice.

"Pretty girls! Brother, you sure said something! A flock of them. And Daphne Jewett. You folks got a treat comin', for she's sure a peacherino!" Cassidy completed the description with crude but eloquent pantomime intended to give a better idea of Miss Jewett's attractive figure.

The men in the crowd laughed and nudged each other. Out of the corner of his eye Billy noticed that Thurston, who was paying his daily visit to town, was interested.

"Is this Jewett peacherino married?" continued Billy.

"Married!" exclaimed Cassidy. "Hell, no! That nifty little dame says she ain't yet found a man who's man enough for her." He sauntered through the crowd toward Billy. Thurston edged in.

"Hello, picture man!" was Billy's genial greeting. He took Cassidy by the arm. "Come and have a drink."

"Will I!" Cassidy's tanned face crinkled into a leathery smile.

"Say," stage-whispered Billy, "is this Jewett lady all she's cracked up to be for looks?"

"She sure is!" Cassidy glanced wistfully at the nearest pair of swinging doors.

"D'ye know her very well?"

"Sure! Worked with her in a lot of pictures. I'm the only one in the outfit who knows her real well."

"You wouldn't turn down an easy piece of change?"

"Not if I'm sober."

"I'll slip you twenty bucks for a knockdown to her when she gets off the train—on condition that you don't introduce any one else to her. Especially a guy called Thurston. I want the laugh on him."

"You're on!" said Cassidy. "When do we drink?"

Billy's proposition had been overheard by Thurston—as was intended. Two steps brought the claim jumper directly in front of the cowboy.

"You don't want to take up with this piker here," he began, indicating Billy with a deprecating wave of a thumb. "Introduce *me* to the girl and I'll pay you——"

"You vamose pronto! Get the hell out of here!" Billy punctuated his interruption by poking the muzzle of a forty-five against Thurston's nose. "What are you trying to horn in for, you moon-jawed tarantula? You candelabra-faced nightmare, I'll damn well see that you don't get a chance to meet her. You can have the claim you jumped—I've got a better one—but I'm the man who's going to show Miss Jewett the town. You ain't got a show in the world!" He steered the cowboy into the nearest oasis.

"Fine work, Billy, fine work!" was Cassidy's compliment, after blowing the collar from a tall one and restoring his voice. "You've got this Thurston hombre all set to stick both feet in the loop."

Bennie Gibson preceded Daphne down the Pullman steps the next morning after the train had come to a stop at the sun-warped depot. Cassidy stepped forward.

"Hello, Mr. Gibson," he said, "I've got the guy you were looking for. This is Mr. McQuade. He owns a mining claim that's just the location you want to shoot."

"Good news," answered Bennie, stifling a grin, for from Billy's description he recognized Thurston standing within earshot. "Glad to know you, McQuade. We'll go out and look at your claim. Our work is liable to be delayed, though, until Featherstone gets out of the hospital." He turned and introduced Billy to the girl.

"Thurston's right behind me." Billy spoke cautiously from one corner of his mouth.

"Get you!" she whispered, and broke forth into rather sticky gush about the magnificent types of manhood to be found on the desert. Her eyes were all for Billy, and the latter's vest buttons were put to a test as he swelled up.

Thurston stood it a while, then walked out behind the depot, threw his hat violently to the ground, and stamped all over it.

A little later, Billy left Miss Jewett on the veranda of the Grand Palace Hotel. Accompanied by Bennie Gibson, he rode away.

Thurston watched their departure. Sourly he reflected that they were heading for Billy's new claim. For lack of anything else to do he sauntered toward the hotel. Hope was low in his breast, for Billy apparently had gained the inner track. Catching sight of the girl, however, hope rose a little, for Thurston knew that his immense physique was attractive to the fair sex. He walked as near as possible to the veranda, ostensibly making for the hotel bar.

Venturing a bold glance at close range, Thurston saw to his surprise that the girl was openly smiling at him—a smile of invitation. He stopped and lifted his hat.

She stepped forward, placed her hands on the veranda rail, and leaned slightly down toward him.

"Pardon me," she said, "but I couldn't refrain from asking. Are you related in any way to George Featherstone? You look enough like him to be his twin brother. George is our leading man."

"George Featherstone! Why, George is my cousin," he lied cheerfully. "I haven't heard of him since Hector got weaned. So he's an actor now. Gee, yes, we always looked alike."

It is to Daphne's credit that she managed to keep a straight face, for Thurston had claimed relationship with a nonexistent character, one invented for the occasion by Bennie Gibson.

"My!" she exclaimed joyfully. "I knew I must be right. It's too bad about George, though. He expected to be out of the hospital yesterday, but he had a relapse. Mr. Gibson, our director, had wired for another lead to join us here to-day, but has received no answer. He may be off in the mountains on a long fishing trip, and that will delay our work. Mr. Gibson will be up against it, for this type is hard to find."

Thurston walked up the steps. She resumed her seat and smiled up at him as he leaned back against the railing and tossed his hat onto a chair. He was vain enough to know that he looked at his best, as all large men do, when standing. He invariably felt awkward and ill at ease when seated in a chair two sizes too small for him. He smiled his prettiest in return. Already that morning he had consumed his usual day's allowance of high-proof tanglefoot; not enough to make him lose his head, but sufficient to warp his judgment when dealing with an extraordinarily beautiful girl.

"You say George's type is hard to find? In what way?"

"Oh, we need a real man, a big, strong man of the Western type, one who looks romantic, who knows how to shoot, to fight with his hands, and—to make love." She looked at him, her eyes aslant. "He has to save poor little me from the villain in this picture, you know. I'm supposed to be kidnaped by a bandit." She threw him another languishing smile, half-veiled by long lashes and lowered eyelids.

"Lady, lady," he sighed, "you ought to keep those eyes at home. This is no place for them, or for me. Romantic?" he repeated. "Does curly hair fill the bill?"

"Why, I suppose it helps a lot."

"Then what's the matter with me?" he insinuated smilingly. "I can fight, shoot, and—well, I'm red-blooded enough not to need many lessons in making love."

"Oh, what an idea!" she cried, delightedly clapping her hands. "You ought to screen as well as Mr. Featherstone—you look so much alike. I'm sure you can double for him. And the bare rudiments of act-

ing will suffice for the action stuff we'll shoot up here. How would you like to rescue me from the bandit? I'm supposed to faint, and you'll have to carry me in your arms. You look strong."

"Action stuff!" repeated Mr. Thurston, laughing and tightening his coat sleeve to show bulging muscles beneath. "Oh, boy! Lead me to it!"

"Here comes Mr. Gibson now," she said, looking down the road. "I'll suggest it to him. I'm sure he'll approve, for it'll save a lot of time. And he's a dandy director. Just do as he says and you can't help but make good. Do you know, I met the most delightful man this morning—Mr. McQuade. Don't you think he's splendid?"

"I do—not!" emphatically. "I know him too well."

"And he seemed so nice, too. We're going to shoot the big scenes out on his claim."

"Well, here's a hot tip, lady. Tell this director fellow to look over *my* claim first. It's a blamed sight better than that colorless wash of McQuade's."

Then Bennie Gibson, minus Billy, appeared on the veranda. Daphne pointed out the remarkable resemblance that Thurston bore to the absent Mr. Featherstone—a remarkable resemblance, indeed.

"I don't know——" Gibson was doubtful. "I thought of using McQuade himself in the part, or Cassidy, the big cowboy. And McQuade's claim is the location I want. He's out there now, waiting for me to bring out the rest of the company."

"Let the four-flusher wait," urged Thurston.

Bennie again critically examined Thurston's features and physique.

"You certainly are a dead ringer for Featherstone," he admitted grudgingly. "It might be possible to double you in the action, and then take the close-ups later when he gets back on the job."

"Just come out and look at the location I can offer you. It's made to order—barbed-wire fence, searchlight, and a machine gun—everything set for a first-class private war. And it ain't much further the other way than McQuade's claim. Less than eight miles."

"A machine gun!" Bennie was thoughtful. "By George! That'll be great stuff. I'll go you. And I want you to hire half a dozen men here in town to fill in the bandit gang."

"What do the bandits do?" inquired Thurston, his opinion of himself waxing in proportion to the increasing sweetness of the smiles cast by Daphne Jewett.

"Why, they stay in their den with the girl, while you and your men rush to the rescue. A lot of fake shooting; most of your men get potted when the bandits spread out among the rocks and cut loose. You're to be the whole cheese in that scene—the man who never misses a shot. I've got a lot of blank cartridges for you. I'll place my assistant back among the rocks with the bandits, and he'll tell each of them when to flop when you've theoretically shot him. See? The camera will get all of it."

"That's all hunky-dory with me."

"And then you defy the remaining bandits and rush up alone; my assistant will tell you when to grab the girl and where to carry her."

"Fine! Say, you won't have to hire any extra men. I've got seven scrappers out on my claim who'll fit in mighty slick. I won't take them off the claim, anyhow, and I'd rather not have any men from town get inside the wire fence."

"Sure, that'll be all right. I suppose I'll have to send a man out to tell McQuade that I've changed my plans."

"No, sir!" Thurston was firm. "I'll work only on condition that you let McQuade stay out on his claim and hold the bag all day long. I owe him one or two."

"It doesn't seem right—but just as you say. You know best."

"Yes, and I know McQuade!" added Thurston, exultation in his soul as he gazed into Daphne Jewett's encouraging eyes for perhaps the fiftieth time.

IV.

While Thurston continued to chat with the girl and gloat over a mental picture of Billy McQuade holding the bag until sundown, the said Mr. McQuade stood less than three hundred yards away in the depot, engaged in pumping the telegraph operator.

"Sure," the station man said, "Thurston boarded the afternoon train for Los Angeles on the same day that you went down. He came back just one train ahead of you. Said he went to buy machinery."

"Huh!" Billy grunted thoughtfully, and looked at the depot clock. The time was nine-thirty.

"Thurston's quite a friend of yours, I understand," he pursued.

"Hell, no!" was the emphatic reply. "I wouldn't let that conceited thief sleep in my dog house."

"Shake!" said Billy. "We belong to the same family! I want you to send a whopping wire for me, and keep it off the file until later. Understand?"

"If it's to put the skids under Thurston I'll do anything that won't cost me my job."

"Good! Now listen!" And Billy talked persuasively. When he finally walked out of the depot, he left behind a happy agent who occasionally slapped one knee and murmured, "Jee-*ru*salem!"

Billy's next call was on the bartender of the Grand Palace; he slipped in through the rear entrance.

"Joe," he said, "I understand that Thirsty Thurston is quite a friend of yours."

"Like fun he is!" denied Joe. "I'd like to wish my rheumatism onto him. That's the way I like him."

"Huh! That being the case, I presume you'd like to help me give him a little ride."

"It depends," grinned Joe, "upon what kind of a ride."

Again Billy talked, earnestly and at length, and readily persuaded the bartender to commit perjury if necessary. This made two unreliable citizens who were to prime Chris Harper, the zealous marshal, in advance of the arrival of a certain expected wire.

Then Billy slipped from the bar into the lobby and made his way upstairs to Bennie Gibson's room.

"No time to spare," said Bennie; "sit in that chair while I fit these whiskers and this wig on you."

"Whiskers!" grinned Billy. "Gosh! It looks more like a young mattress in the raw."

"Your own mother wouldn't know you with this on. Neither will Thurston. He's still on the front veranda letting our vamp feed him mush with a spoon.

"Now, remember," he cautioned, when the hirsute adornment had been adjusted, "your name is John Williams and you are my assistant director. Also, you're the villain in the big scene—the bandit chief who has captured Miss Jewett. Thurston is her sweetheart, who rescues her—maybe! Get me? All right, come down and meet Thurston. It's lucky that the poor fish knows nothing about the picture game or he'd never fall for this bunk."

A stagecoach, and a carry-all, drawn by six horses, sufficed to transport the entire company over the sandy, difficult road to the vicinity of Avocado Cañon.

The guards opened the gate to admit Thurston and three companions inside the barbed-wire fence. Thurston abruptly addressed his right-hand man.

"Jim, you're all going to be picture actors to-day. This is Mr. Gibson, the director, and this is Mr. Williams, his assistant. Williams is to stay here, and you are to be under his orders. Whatever he says *goes!* He's supposed to be a bandit chief, and you boys are his gang. He's kidnaped the lady here"—indicating Miss Jewett—"and I'm the man who rescues her. Fix the gate so's I can open it from the outside, after I've gunned you up."

"Gunned who?" Jim was frankly alarmed.

"You and your men. Certainly! With blank shells. It's all a fake, you understand. And you boys are to shoot off a lot of blanks at me. Williams has them here in that gunny sack."

"I see." Jim drew a breath of relief. "And I obey 'Whiskers?' "

"You do!" snapped Thurston. "Absolutely! Do as he says or you'll hear from me."

"How about McQuade?"

Thurston laughed, and explained.

Jim's face also relaxed in amusement. "I'll hand it to you for being able to deal deuces all around. Say," he whispered, "give me a knock-down to the gal."

"Keep off the grass!" warned Thurston. "She's mine!"

Gibson and the claim jumper departed, the former to station his camera man on a high rock overlooking the mouth of the cañon, Thurston to confer with Cassidy and the other men who were to follow him in the attack.

Safe in his disguise, Billy remained in the cañon—with the girl.

"Come and get your blanks, Jim," he ordered, after Thurston had passed beyond easy hailing distance. "Got a forty-five, ain't you?"

"Yep, and a thirty-thirty."

"Here's twenty blanks for each. Hand me your rifle."

Jim passed over the weapon, and Billy, first emptying the blank cartridges from the sack onto a rock, proceeded to pump the shells from the magazine of the rifle. These he dropped into the sack.

"Now the Colt," he said.

Jim complied, but a vague uneasiness and suspicion grew in his eyes.

"You don't want *all* my shells?" he blurted out.

"Sure I do. Our leading man got shot up in Barstow because some darned fool shoved a loaded cartridge into his gun when he got excited. We ain't takin' any chances—and Thurston agrees with me. Remember, you'll be shooting at him. Take the shells out of your belt loops and shove these blanks back in."

"Damned if I will!" Jim burst out.

"Easy there! A lady is with us. And Thurston put you absolutely under my orders. What license have you got to question? You can tie your shells into your bandana before you drop them into the sack—if you want to keep them separate."

"It looks wrong. But Thurston ought to know what he's doing." Jim stripped himself of loaded cartridges.

Then in turn Billy proceeded to requisition the ammunition from each man in exchange for blanks.

"Glory be!" he finally muttered under his breath, "the claim is mine again."

"What's that?" questioned Jim sharply.

"I was hummin' a tune."

"Funny tune! Say, I don't feel right about this. I want to keep a few shells in my pocket." He walked toward the sack. Billy stepped in front of him.

Followed a moment of absolute silence—a battle of eyes.

"What you want and what you get are two different things!" corrected Billy in a cool tone. He walked to the other side of the sack, then turned and jerked out his Colts.

"Drop those useless guns!" he snapped. "Hands up! I sort of forgot to put blanks in these babies. Miss Jewett, will you oblige by removing the six guns from the holsters of the gents who are now reaching for the sun?

"Good girl!" he commended, after she had divested them of the weapons, "that's fine!"

"Now hike!" he ordered the men. "Up the cañon, and don't stop to pick daisies!"

He turned again to the girl, who had drawn near.

"How about it?" he smiled.

"Mr. McQuade, you're a wonder! I'm so glad you got your claim back!" Impulsively she reached up and kissed him.

"Hey!" protested Billy, blushing, his hands cumbered with the guns. "Did you vamp Thurston that way?"

"Indeed not! Oh! I don't know what to say. What you must think of me. I must have been terribly excited."

"Golly! I wish you'd stay excited," grinned Billy.

He turned in answer to a hail. Three hundred yards away stood Cassidy, poised on a low rock, the better to be seen. With him stood Thurston, Cassidy's hand holding the back of the claim-jumper's collar.

"I saw yuh clean up!" he yelled, "so I beat the other boys to it. Do I get a bonus?"

"Earn it!" shouted Billy, and Cassidy pushed Thurston off the rock, a heavy boot applied with precision and force helping him on his way.

"Oh, the brute!" cried Daphne. "Did you tell him to do that?"

"Uh-huh," nodded Billy, rolling a cigarette.

"Oh, I *hate* you, Billy McQuade! I detest a brute!"

"Huh!" Billy looked up in surprise, and spilled the tobacco. "That bird ain't hurt none. He just got what was coming," he explained. "I didn't figure on the play coming up this way. I wanted Thurston to lead my men and capture the claim, but I couldn't pass up the chance I had a minute ago. I thought I'd start a little competition by offering fifty bucks extra to the man who kicked Thurston off the claim. I ain't gonna hedge on a technicality. Cassidy gets the fifty."

"I won't think much of you if you don't apologize to Mr. Thurston."

"What! Apologize to that—that—gent!" Billy gulped twice. "All right, ma'am, I'll sure apologize."

Again he hailed Cassidy, instructing him to bring Thurston. Within a few minutes the entire strength of the picture company had assembled in the cañon; Cassidy had a deathhold on his prisoner.

"Apologize!" prompted Daphne.

"Sure," grinned Billy. "Thurston, I'm sure sorry that Cassidy booted you a while

ago. I'm sure sorry, because I'd like to have been in his place."

Billy gazed to the south, toward Mohican, where a horseman hastened in the direction of the cañon. Soon, he recognized the rider as Chris Harper, the redoubtable marshal.

Reaching into his pocket, Billy edged toward Thurston. The latter raised his eyes, met Billy's, and then wondered what was coming next, for Mr. McQuade leaped, caught him around the waist, then spoke to Cassidy.

"Get a rope; we've got to keep him out of mischief."

"Aw, what's the use?" protested Cassidy, carefully watching a certain movement of his employer's hand.

"That's right!" Gibson chimed in. "He's harmless. Let him alone."

"Guess I'm outvoted," grumbled Billy, stepping back.

"What's next?" inquired Cassidy.

"Take a few of the boys, go up the cañon and herd Thurston's men back this way. Throw them off the claim."

Cassidy chose his men and disappeared.

Then Chris Harper rode up, dismounted, and headed straight for Thurston.

"You're the man I want!" he thundered. "I've got a telegraphed warrant for you from Los Angeles."

"For me? What have I done?"

"You blamed well know what you've done," said Chris sternly. "You'd have been safe, maybe, if you hadn't boasted about it to the telegraph operator and the barkeep at the Grand Palace. Why, you even showed the badge to them. Got it on you now?"

"I've got nothing like that. Search me," invited Thurston.

Chris did, and in pulling a bundle of papers from a pocket, let a small book fall to the ground. A bank book, grimy, dog-eared, broken-backed from years of use. Daphne Jewett, beating Billy to it, stooped and picked it up, open at the page bearing the last entry and balance. As she handed it to the marshal her sharp eyes caught a glimpse of the recently entered balance. Her eyes widened; she suddenly caught her breath, then looked at Thurston with a new interest.

Billy, too, had seen the figures—six of them, a sum above two hundred thousand dollars.

"O Lord!" he implored with a grimace. "And to think I thought it would pay to be almost honest."

Harper then brought to light a patrolman's star. Thurston, too amazed for words, realized that he had been tricked.

"Come along," ordered the marshal; "that clinches it!"

"What's the idea?" inquired Bennie Gibson, after the officer had departed with his prisoner. "You can't hang that on Thurston!"

"I don't expect to. I'm just twisting his tail a little. A couple of Mohican's best citizens will swear that Thurston showed them the badge and bragged about putting the bee on the police. If Thurston tries to back-fire, it's up to you to swear that my men were out of town with you at the time."

"I'll be there like the poison ivy—climbing all over," promised Bennie.

The girl suddenly broke into the conversation.

"Bennie, is this a put-up job on Mr. Thurston?"

"I'd hardly call it that; it's nature taking her course."

"I won't stand for it. I'll tell the authorities!"

"Will you?" inquired Bennie sweetly. "I hate to use blackmail, but I'm sure you won't say a word. Isn't that right?"

She flushed. "Yes, Bennie, and I wish you were a mind reader." Her tone was likewise sweet. "And I suppose I do owe something to Mr. McQuade. I promise to be silent."

"I thought so," smiled the director.

Billy reached for his check book, and borrowed a fountain pen from Gibson.

"Here you are, Miss Jewett. I deducted the two hundred I advanced, but allowed one hundred for expenses. You certainly made good, so I slapped on an extra five hundred. That's kind of tangled, but is it clear? The five hundred extra is a bonus for the—for your—services."

She thanked him, chatted briefly, and finally asked Gibson when the stagecoach would start back to Mohican.

"If you're in a hurry I'll tell the driver to take you in now," he replied. "The rest of the company will stay here all day; this is the location I want."

Billy reluctantly watched her departure.

"Say, Mr. Gibson," he said at last, "you can do me a hell of a favor by giving me her telephone number."

"That's the kind of a favor it would be, all right," said Bennie dryly. "You don't get it."

Three days later, having finished the desert scenes, the film players were preparing to return to Los Angeles. Billy walked down to the depot with the director, and was surprised at seeing Sam Benson descend the steps from the incoming train.

"Hello, Sam!" smiled Billy. "Thought a little desert air would do you good, eh? How does Thurston like jail? Could he prove an alibi."

"Jail! He isn't in jail at all, nor has he been. When he got to Los Angeles they took him right into justice court. The judge bound him over for trial—bail five hundred dollars. They wouldn't take his check; wouldn't even let him arrange to get cash. He had to pungle up right there or go behind the bars. Raw deal, but the cops had it in for him. His bank account was in Bakersfield. Then Daphne Jewett walks in and hands up ten fifty-dollar bills. It sure disappointed the cops, but they had to let him go. And where do you think he went? Right around to the county clerk's to get a marriage license. Married right away. Either he or the vamp is a quick worker—and I suspect her."

"Bad luck to them!" sighed Billy. "It was the extra five hundred I gave her that got him out."

"You gave her five hundred extra! And then she cheated you with it!" Sam laughed. "Why did you give it to her?"

"I was feeling pretty generous because I got my claim back—and, besides, she kissed me once."

"Some kiss!" said Sam. "Five hundred to the birdies because she kissed you once! You need a guardian, but there's one thing you can be thankful for."

"What's that?" inquired Billy unsuspectingly.

"That she didn't kiss you *twice!*"

GONE MAD WITH "DON'T"

COLONEL FRANKLIN P. MORGAN is a snowy-haired and silver-throated cosmopolite who sheds the radiance of his appearance, personality, and opinions with equal glory and impartiality upon the peacock alleys of New York hotels and the corridors of Congress. Observing the rules of the cosmopolites' union, the colonel dislikes all sumptuary laws in general and prohibition in particular.

When discussing those who promote such measures, self-restraint is not one of his offenses. He is belted, booted, and spurred with indignation, armed cap-a-pie with wrath, helmeted with rage. He leaps, clanking, rattling, and tinkling, into the arena. He breathes forth malediction, annihilation, and imprecation. He thunders in the index and threatens in the epilogue. He is full of minacity, mutterings, and menace. He defies; he roars; he execrates; he blows!

And he carries a notebook.

One evening he displayed the penciled pages under the glow of the clustered lights in a New York lobby. His hair stood on end. He went berserk with protest and south with self-control.

"Look!" he invited, teetering on the tight-rope of tremors and fidgets. "I've at last found a precedent for these guys who want to tell us what to drink, eat, digest, whisper, and feel! I've been thinking that nobody like them ever lived—but I was wrong. Listen! Get this! Take it in! It's not quite as bad as these prohibition fellows, but it resembles—resembles! Here you are! It's Number 58 of Connecticut's old blue laws:

"'If any man shall kiss his wife, or wife kiss her husband, on the Lord's Day, the party in fault shall be punished at the discretion of the court of magistrates.'

"There you are! The spirit of 'don't!' has been inherited. It's in the blood of these interferers—gone mad with 'don't!' They've reverted to type. And they've just started all over again! Before they're through they'll outdo their great-grandfathers—and I'll go into a dusty decline, mourning dryly for the handicaps put on Cupid!"

The Master Key

By Francis Metcalfe

Author of "Treasure of Trebizond," Etc.

Here is a novel of the financial world plus psychic phenomena. It is about a refined and beautiful girl who is called upon to play a strange rôle among the Titans of Wall Street. Her job is one of the queerest ever given man or woman. Behind her, manipulating her psychic gifts, is a man of evil purpose, apparently. The forces brought into play between their inner and outer selves, and the money-mad world provide us with a strong and sensational story. The creator of "Tommy Williams" gives us plenty to think about in this drama of personality and the stock market.

(A Four-Part Novel—Part I.)

CHAPTER I.

IN outward appearance there was little to distinguish the house from others in the row. They all presented fronts of brown sandstone, each was approached by a broad flight of stone steps and, save for an occasional bow window added as an afterthought, each was so like its adjoining neighbors that the gilt numbers on the fanlights above the doors were necessary for exact identification. Before one of them Kathleen Hempstead paused uncertainly and, drawing a card from her purse, verified the number before ascending the steps to ring the bell; for the closely drawn shades at all the windows and the tightly closed outer door of the vestibule gave the house the appearance of being temporarily uninhabited.

It was the first bright and sunny day after a tiresome week of rain, and the other cave dwellers on the block were taking advantage of the change to admit air and sunshine through open windows and doors. Her fingers had hardly touched the button, however, before her doubts were dispelled; for the outer door immediately swung noiselessly open, closing as noiselessly behind her when she stepped into the spacious vestibule. That much without evident human agency; but the inner door was quickly opened by a very human Ethiopian, black as the traditional ace of spades, his kinky wool hidden by the folds of an enormous turban, his massive figure attired in an Oriental costume of brilliant colors.

For a moment Kathleen hesitated; if the first door had not closed behind her she would have stepped back into the security of sunshine and the purity of fresh air; for the open door revealed a dimly lighted, mysterious interior and through it came the hint of a stuffy and unwholesome atmosphere, heavy with incense. The impulse to escape was strengthened by the curious behavior of the blackamoor; for he greeted her with a profound salaam which, to an American girl unacquainted with the customs of the East, seemed menacing rather than servile. In fact, one hand went swiftly behind her, tentatively feeling for the knob of the outer door, when a reassuring voice came from the inner obscurity; reassuring because of an unmistakable American twang which cut like a knife through the suggestion of Oriental mystery.

"You, Luce; cut out the kowtow business and ask Miss Hempstead to come in!" it said peremptorily and after a quick "Yes, suh!" the negro straightened up, a broad grin displaying flashing ivories as he transmitted the invitation. Kathleen accepted it, her feet sinking into heavy rugs as she stepped over the threshold to find herself in a dimly lighted and curiously furnished room of large proportions. Not a ray of

sunshine filtered through the windows concealed by heavy Oriental draperies; the only light came from a few wicks floating in perfumed oil in small filigree lamps and a large iridescent globe in the middle of the ceiling; an illumination which left the surrounding walls almost invisible to eyes coming directly from the outer sunshine.

A tall, slender man, swarthy of skin, with a thin, aquiline nose suggesting the predatory bird, a Mephistophelean mustache and goatee and coal-black hair brushed from a high, narrow forehead and falling almost to his shoulders, rose from the divan on which he had been lounging to meet her.

"On time to the minute, Miss Hempstead —that's a good starter," he said, and, in spite of the dim light, the girl had the uncomfortable feeling that his sharp black eyes had appraised at a single glance every detail of her personal appearance. "Suppose we go into my own quarters to talk things over; this room is fixed up for the audiences of the Grand Panjandrum of Flimflamabad, and the atmosphere is a little strong for a white man's business." He drew back a heavy curtain—she noted that the walls were hung with them all around—and opening a door motioned to her to precede him. The room into which she passed was absolutely commonplace; a roll-top desk, a safe, a filing cabinet, and a couple of chairs comprised the furniture; a large calendar bearing the picture of an impossibly pink-and-white girl and a life-insurance advertisement on the wall was the only ornament.

He closed the door and, motioning her to be seated, took the chair at the desk and consulted a letter which she recognized as her own, written the day before in answer to an advertisement in a Sunday paper. At least, he seemed to read it, but again she was conscious—and this time more uncomfortably so because of the better light, that his eyes were inventorying and appraising every detail of her face, figure, and costume. Now in the appraisal of the first two items by a prospective employer, there could be nothing to cause her uneasiness. She was a tall, handsome young woman, girlish and graceful of figure, clear-skinned, bright-eyed, and intelligent. But with the costume it was a different matter; her gown was modish in cut, of good material and immaculately neat; but it had obviously seen long service and had undergone many alterations to conform it to the whims of changing fashions. The shoes covering her slender, shapely feet were perfectly polished; but there was no concealing the fact that they had almost reached the limits of usefulness; the gloves, fresh and spotless, had just as evidently undergone the last possible cleaning and betrayed in a half dozen places the mending of a none too skillful needle.

"My name is Ware—in this office," he said curtly as he dropped the letter back on the desk. "I had a bushel of letters in reply to my advertisement, Miss Hempstead; you are the only one I've asked to call for a personal interview, and I reckon I made a good guess. It's part of my business to make good guesses about people—and things."

"But I hardly know what prompted me to answer," she said. "Curiosity, perhaps; the wording was so obscure it might have meant almost anything; it was very puzzling."

Ware smiled and shook his head.

"Call it subtle; that's what I meant it to be," he corrected, and then more bluntly: "See here, Miss Hempstead, I'm going to be perfectly and brutally frank with you; suppose you try to be with me! It wasn't curiosity—it was necessity—a sort of clutching-at-a-straw proposition. If you are tired enough of playing that bluff to get right down to the brass tacks of business, I'm your man; a business that will enable you to forget the hall bedroom and cooking-over-the-gas-jet stunts and live on Easy Street—the sunny side, at that—forgetting to study the right-hand side of the bill of fare when you eat at a restaurant."

Kathleen's face flushed and she half rose from her chair; but he laughed—there was more of cynicism than mirth in that laugh, she thought—and motioned to her to be seated.

"Take it easy, Miss Hempstead, and don't take offense where none is meant; I'm going to say a lot more startling things than that and call a spade by its proper name when it's necessary to refer to it. I know more about you than you think; knowing something makes it a whole lot easier to guess the rest. Now, this isn't the kind of a proposition you've heard before and turned down flat; I'm not offering you a career of gilded infamy. I'm no Don Juan nor gay Lothario; but, if you get me right, you won't mistake me for a blooming philanthropist. I'm not offering something for

nothing; I expect full value for good pay; but you won't find anything in it to make you blush." His voice had grown harsh and cold; qualities which she found curiously reassuring; for they helped to allay the apprehension aroused by his first blunt words. His sharp, black eyes were fixed on her face, but their expression was as hard as steel, as cold as ice; the frank appraisal of her beauty was too impersonal to be embarrassing, and she settled back in her chair, meeting his scrutiny without flinching.

"You will pardon me, but I've learned suspicion in a hard school," she said bitterly, the flush on her cheeks momentarily deepening. "My position hasn't been altogether what——"

"No offense and no explanations necessary!" interrupted Ware. "I've told you that it's my business to know and to guess. Now, I *know* a lot about you, young woman; I can tell you the half dozen jobs you have managed to land in the nine months you have been playing the hardest game in the world—trying to make an honest, decent living in little old New York and playing on the level with yourself. That's exact knowledge; but I reckon I could *guess* the reason for your losing out in every one of 'em. No, you needn't blush, Miss Hempstead; I'm not going into details," he went on hastily as the flush on her face deepened to crimson and her eyes dropped in embarrassment. "I just want you to know that I'm wise to the whole game and to be convinced that you won't be up against that sort of thing if we come to terms. Now, how about it—shall I go on?"

"Yes, please," she said guardedly after a moment's hesitation, her eyes again meeting his. "Of course, I am still entirely in the dark as to what you want; it is more than probable that I may be entirely unfitted for the——"

"Suppose that you let me be the judge of that!" he interrupted again. "I can tell you what I want in mighty few words. In the first place, brains!" He paused for a moment, checking the first necessary qualification on the forefinger of his right hand.

"There is nothing in my experience of the past few months to suggest that I have any!" she protested. "As you seem to know, I've lost every position I managed to obtain."

"That's all right. I told you I was something of a guesser, and I'm not guessing anything which implies lack of brains as the explanation of your being fired," continued Ware impatiently. "I'm willing to back my own judgment on that, and there will be no dispute about the second requirement. Good looks—'way above the average—you've got 'em!"

"If I have, they have certainly proved anything but a valuable business asset," she said ruefully as he paused to check the item by bending down a second finger.

There was a little return of uneasiness and restraint; Ware's manner and voice were still absolutely impersonal, but such a frank avowal from a prospective employer was a danger signal.

"Not so good that they can't be improved by proper dressing, though," he went on, ignoring her remark. "That's a detail which we can easily arrange later, however. You're tall, a shade better than five feet ten, I take it; slender, and you carry yourself well; you'll be a knock-out when I get you rigged out the way I want you; clothes help a lot. You understand, of course, that's all up to me; I foot the bills."

"But, Mr. Ware, as you said, that is a detail which can be easily arranged; there is the main proposition to be considered first and as yet I haven't the remotest idea of what you require," she protested smiling; but sweeping her from head to foot with his keen, black eyes, Ware seemed too absorbed in his planning to note her objections.

"Simplicity and elegance—there's the keynote for the first appearance," he continued as if thinking aloud. "Just enough of the unusual to stimulate imagination; that will have to be carefully handled. Simple lines, long and distinct as a Mucha poster; that requires clinging stuff of the softest, richest material; black would be best with that clear complexion; black with just one single touch of vivid color! Not too much in the way of jewels; perhaps a ruby square in the middle of that low, broad forehead; just one ruby in a perfectly plain band of gold; that, or a large emerald at the throat!"

Kathleen listened in amazement. For a young woman wearing her last presentable frock, still presentable only because of meticulous care and ceaseless sponging, mending, and pressing; carrying her worldly wealth—barely enough for another day's food of the simplest and cheapest kind—in her small pocketbook, the talk of fine raiment and jewels was bewildering.

"That would do for the first appearance —say at Fragonard's, or the Opera," continued Ware. "Then the studio rig; Oriental, of course! Gee! We could loosen up on the color scheme there; colors and gold embroidery; seed pearl slippers; perhaps a rope or two of pearls and a flashing tiara; we could make that a riot! Of course, when it comes down to the real business—white; nothing but! Simple, pure white; nothing to detract attention from the face; not a jewel, not a suggestion of color; that's it!"

Kathleen looked at him uneasily. His eyes were still fixed upon her, not once since he had dropped the letter on the desk had they wandered, but now they did not seem to see her. They were fixed, almost the eyes of a man entranced; she was directly in the line of their vision, but they gave the impression of looking through or beyond her, beholding something to her invisible.

"Ah, yes, I can see it all!" he continued in a tense voice, hardly more than a whisper. "The lights dim; the soft music, subdued laughter, and the murmur of many voices from the tables; then a sudden hush, not a sound save the subdued orchestra as she sweeps through the room to her place; every face turned toward her, a question in every eye. And then as she seats herself—self-assured, regal in her bearing, coldly oblivious to the sensation she has created; the hum of eager inquiry, the furtive questioning of waiters—gad!"

Kathleen's uneasiness had changed to fascination as she listened. In the few simple words of his description he had conveyed a vivid picture to her mind—a picture in which she recognized herself as the central figure. Not the shabbily dressed figure of a girl sitting in an office as an applicant for a position to save her from actual want; but an exquisitely gowned woman, carrying herself and her costume as she knew she could carry them, sweeping through a crowded, fashionable restaurant, compelling in her beauty. She came back to reality with a start to find Ware looking at her intently with black eyes which seemed to have changed to beads.

"You have imagination, my girl; so have I. No one ever gets very far who hasn't; but we must not let it run away with us until we forget realities," he said gravely. There was a marked change in his voice, a suggestion of uneasiness or uncertainty. "So, we shall return to them—do you want the position?"

"I want *a* position, or I should not have come here," she answered guardedly. "You have not explained what you want—or—or anything!" There was something so disconcerting in his steady gaze that she concluded weakly, confusedly.

"I'm something of a mind reader; perhaps I credited you with too much of the same gift, some you must possess, or you would never have answered my advertisement," said Ware with a shrug of his shoulders. "At any rate, I can get close enough to what is in yours to tell you your exact circumstances and how much you desire *a* position. Miss Hempstead, you are well born, but your early training was an unfortunate one for you. At the hands of a cultivated, lovable, but not too wise father you received a liberal education in the finer things of life without being taught to do a single practical thing well enough to support yourself when the crash came and he died—leaving you absolutely alone in the world with small knowledge of it and little but your beauty which could be turned into money. That, I believe, is correct?"

"Practically, but beside the point!" she answered defiantly. For months she had fought against permitting the truth to embitter the memories of that charming, lovable, and utterly impractical father who had failed to arm her for the bitter fight for existence into which she was thrust by his death.

"Nothing is beside the point which is practical," continued Ware, twisting her words to his own purpose. "The main point is that it's the truth. Miss Hempstead, you've played the game courageously and to the best of your ability, but you're whipped. Virtue is it's own reward in your case; you wouldn't be worth a sou markee to me if you hadn't earned that reward. I'm using the word in its narrowest meaning, too," he went on mercilessly in spite of her blushes "I could have my pick of a hundred as good looking and attractive as yourself if I would consider the other kind, but ab-so-lute-ly nothing doing at any price! So far, so good; but where has that successful fight to preserve your own self-respect and, incidentally, my respect for you, left you, Miss Hempstead? I'll answer that for you—broke; stony broke! You may use a brave, strong front to put up a bluff; good for you! But you can't eat a bluff, and there's a limit to

the time it can be successfully worked, even on the landlady of a fourth-rate rooming house!"

The flush had vanished, leaving her face white and blanched, but there was no suggestion of tremor about her firm mouth; not the faintest trace of fear in the eyes which met his steadily and questioningly.

"You must indeed be an adept mind reader if the accuracy of your statements is a proof of your skill," she admitted frankly. She felt that those keen eyes could have pierced the leather of her purse to count the exact amount of the small store of money it contained, so accurately had he stated her exact position, so unerringly had he implied the conditions which led to it. "Unfortunately, I haven't the same gift and I can't see where all this is getting me; why you should have asked me to call upon you?"

Ware looked at her for a moment in silence, a subtle change in his expression. His eyes were no longer appraising; they were watchful; the eyes of a skilled fencer watching for the favorable moment and opening to slip past his adversary's guard.

"I'm coming to that," he said. "First, I wanted you to be convinced that I knew exactly where you stood; then to realize that what I have to propose will rescue you from that most precarious, unpleasant, and unstable footing—and without asking you to pay the price which other men have demanded for less. Here are a few things which it will mean to you: No more stuffy rooming house; you will be luxuriously lodged. An end to petty economies and shabby dress, no more skimping and curbing that healthy young appetite for both food and pleasure. Comfort, luxury, beautiful clothes, a dainty table; your own limousine, if you like. Do those things appeal to you, Miss Hempstead?"

Kathleen laughed outright, but it was not the kind of a laugh which should have come from between the lips of a young girl.

"Would cool water appeal to a man dying of thirst?" she exclaimed bitterly, the accompanying movement which brought her halfway to her feet suggesting that the bitterness was born of disappointment. "But why do you hesitate, Mr. Ware? You have told me the price I should *not* be asked to pay; why not be equally frank in telling me the price I *must* pay?" Ware did hesitate before speaking—longer this time than before, but it was not a hesitancy born of indecision. He was waiting; watching her every movement as a cat watches a mouse, perhaps more aptly—from the beady, black eyes—as a serpent watches the fluttering of a bird; waiting and watching to see if the girl followed her first impulse and rose to her feet.

And Kathleen, discouraged by successive failures in the brave fight she had made, physically below par from the insufficient nourishment of the cheap and unsatisfying diet dictated by her rapidly shrinking purse, humiliated by the shifts necessary to conceal her poverty and placate the suspicions of a harridan of a landlady, did flutter as helplessly as the half-fascinated bird. Try as she would, she could not banish from her mind the memory of the vision he had raised there nor the tangible promise of relief from the sordid worries which harrassed her and the enjoyment of the luxuries and niceties of life which her soul craved. Something in the fixed, cold, and absolutely passionless stare of those beady black eyes seemed to bring back the vision more vividly than she had seen it through the medium of his word picture and dimly in the background there was the suggestion of the reality she knew too well; the shabby hall bedroom just below the roof, the cheap, greasy restaurants, the sights, sounds, and smells to which refusal to listen further meant inevitable return. Her decision was not entirely voluntary, even while yielding she knew that her movements were not controlled entirely by her own better judgment, warped as that judgment might be by humiliation and anxiety. There was something compelling in those cold, black eyes; something irresistibly alluring in the vision which under their spell she could not banish. And at last Ware spoke, for the girl's muscles relaxed and with a little gesture of surrender she sank back in her chair prepared to listen.

A half hour later through the tiniest of cracks between the heavy curtains which concealed him, Ware watched the girl descend the outer steps. On the sidewalk she paused a moment, irresolutely; but he dropped the curtain, a cynical, triumphant smile on his lips as she turned and walked rapidly down the street.

"How'd you make out, suh?" asked the darky who had let her out.

Ware shook his head, but there was a twinkle in his eyes.

"She *thinks* she's going to sleep on it before she decides, Luce," he said cynically. "Just the same, you can 'can' that fool rig you're wearing and, for Heaven's sake, chuck that stinking incense out. We'll start ripping out this fake Oriental junk to-morrow; we're finished with the piking flim-flam, Luce; we'll get after the big fish, for I've got the bait!"

"Is yo' all sure of that, suh?" asked Luce doubtfully. "She didn't look——"

"Luce, she sat down to listen after she was scared blue—and that's good enough for me," answered Ware confidently.

CHAPTER II.

For the first time in many days, Kathleen approached without uneasiness or trepidation the house which had meant home to her. Every day since with flaming cheeks she had left the last employment which assured at least safety from actual want, her loathing for the place had increased, but each night as she counted her rapidly diminishing cash resources she realized with a sinking heart that even this shabby, untidy shelter would soon be denied to her unless fortune smiled upon her endless, untiring search for that employment which would give her, not a living wage, but the assurance of bare existence.

Not for a moment did she acknowledge she had accepted Ware's proposition which promised luxury, relief from harrassing anxiety and release from her drab, sordid existence. In fact, Ware himself had prevented her from giving an immediate and definite answer.

"Sleep over it before you decide; take counsel of the night; I've got a hunch that we shall do business, but it's a heap wiser to regret the chance you missed than to be sorry for the mistake you grabbed off in a hurry!" he had said in that queer mixture of cultivated English and colloquial idiom which was not the least puzzling manifestation of his strange personality. He had said that when the announcement of her decision had trembled on her lips, although Kathleen, even now, was not entirely sure what that decision would have been had he permitted her to make it. And while saying it he had reached out a long, slender hand, filched from her the sadly flattened purse, returning it a moment later distended with crisp, new bills.

"You'll give me your answer to-morrow; not now!" he continued imperatively, and under the steady, passionless stare of his black eyes the hands which had been raised in protest involuntarily opened to receive back the suddenly grown plethoric purse. "If it is to be 'yes,' the quicker you cut loose the better, and that will make it easy and save time. If not—oh, well, you can hand it back when you bring me the sad news and, believe me, I'll take it. Just remember that this is straight business—not charity."

There was something in the feel of that rounded bit of leather which gave confidence to her step as she let herself into the dingy, gloomy hallway. She remembered how she had hurried through it when she went out to escape a possible encounter with the landlady who never forgot the exact day upon which rent was due. Not that the money which she carried was hers to use; even as she opened the door Kathleen assured herself that she was still undecided; but it was in her hand, it might be—and, after all, the proposal as Ware had made it was plausible and—well, she would sleep over it, as he had advised. Counsel given as those black eyes were fixed on hers sank deep—as did many other things he had said, for visions which he had conjured obscured details of the proposal which to unfettered vision might have looked dubious.

Never had the cheerless cubicle to which she climbed looked more uninviting. Clean it was, as clean as her own effort could make it, but the ceiling was stained from an old leak in the roof close above it, the cheap wall paper torn and soiled by many previous occupants less careful than she had been. Lack of space precluded much furniture, perhaps, judging by the rickety washstand, the battered dresser, and the uninviting cot bed, a fortunate limitation of horrors. Of her own occupancy there was only slight visible evidence, a steamer trunk marked with her father's initials and bearing a tattered assortment of foreign hotel labels which reminded her bitterly of his careless manner of life, had sufficed to hold her scanty wardrobe and everything of intrinsic value had long since been sacrificed. On the battered dresser stood two photographs in simple frames, one of them the likeness of her handsome father, so long a voluntary expatriate that he was obviously a man without a country and a citizen of the world,

the other the picture of a younger man, the strong, clean-shaven face typically American.

Kathleen threw open the window, for the room was redolent of the odors of cooking from the floors below—those same odors which more than once had increased her own unsatisfied pangs of hunger but which now, although she had eaten nothing since a strictly Continental breakfast of a roll and coffee surreptitiously made over the single gas jet, fairly sickened her. There was still a vision in her memory: the picture of a woman exquisitely dressed, perfectly groomed, surrounded by every luxury and deftly served with dainty food by obsequious waiters; a vision so distinct that she saw through it only dimly the two faces gazing at her from the frames on the dresser when she turned from the cheerless outlook over untidy, rubbish-filled back yards and weather-stained, soot-begrimed buildings.

There was nothing to destroy the allurement of that vision in the photographic reproduction of her father's face. Live and let live, might well have been his motto, but he had been notoriously careless as to the living of the rest of the world so long as his own was ordered to his satisfaction. That exaggerated selfishness which, when skillfully masked with suavity in securing one's own comfort, so easily passes for broad tolerance, had made him appear to be exceptionally charitable and liberal-minded in judging others. She felt that if that photograph should come to life and give her counsel it would dismiss her lingering doubts with a careless shrug of the graceful, sloping shoulders, and advise the easiest way out of her difficulties. That had always been his own attitude. She had wandered over the face of Europe with him, making many acquaintances but few friends in their perigrinations. Always he had provided for her material wants generously, often lavishly; it contributed to his own comfort to have everything which belonged to him comfortable and contented. She had never questioned him as to the amount or source of his income and he had never enlightened her. It was only when he died suddenly in New York—and it was only chance that they were in America when the end came—that she learned that with him died the annuity purchased for himself, with the small fortune inherited from the mother who died when she was born. There were debts which claimed more than the small balance at his bankers, the forced sale of the contents of their studio apartment produced barely enough to pay off the servants and meet the funeral expenses and, face to face with the stern realities of life, Kathleen was forced to take stock of her own personal resources and found the completed inventory pitifully small.

She could speak fluently several languages acquired in their wandering life, but she had thoroughly mastered none of them, and she realized that she possessed no talent for teaching. She sang pleasingly, she had many minor accomplishments and social graces, but nothing salable. Her father had resolutely refused to contemplate such a disagreeable contingency as his own death; he had selfishly robbed her of her birthright to increase his own comfort, taking no thought for her future and even neglecting to prepare her for it. Perhaps there was a little of resentment in her eyes as she looked at his photograph; there was no mistaking the challenge and defiance in them as she turned to the shrewd, kindly, and uncompromisingly honest face of the younger man.

How well she remembered the look in those fearless, straightforward eyes as he had told her the blunt and disagreeable truth, that through the incredible selfishness and utterly callous carelessness of her father she was left penniless. He hadn't minced words, for he had let righteous indignation run away with his tongue. The matter had been turned over to him by the senior members of the law firm in the ordinary course of business; it was one of his first independent assignments and the human interest made stronger appeal to him than the legal technicalities. He had every desire to be helpful and that desire grew more and more personal as day by day he was brought into close contact with the attractive girl and realized how utterly unprepared she was for the inevitable struggle ahead of her. And when the final settlement came and he placed in her possession the pitifully small salvage he had been able to garner from the wreck of her fortunes, his indignation had gotten the better of his discretion.

Kathleen had listened dry-eyed, set of face, to the first frank, truthful, and altogether accurate estimate of her father which she had ever heard. That estimate was pitiless, uncompromising, and scorching, and it

left that altogether charming and delightful *flaneur* and dilettante without a shred of the undeniable social charm which had covered his heartless selfishness and made him such a pleasant companion. Devereux had not intended to do it—he had come prepared and determined to make an entirely different appeal to her. It was a chance remark of hers, a little attempt to emphasize the virtues and minimize the vices of her father which had uncorked the vials of his wrath and precipitated the bitter outbursts, and when it was finished she had coldly refused to listen to what he had intended to say.

She was outraged and furiously indignant, and Devereux, shamefaced and embarrassed when he realized how far beyond the bounds of propriety his righteous indignation had carried him, had accepted without protest the contemptuous dismissal from her lips, resolved to see her again and ask for at least forgiveness when her anger had cooled. But Kathleen, her confidence to care for herself as yet unshaken by disappointment and discouragement of experience, had given him no further opportunity. Realization of the truth of his statements increased rather than excused the bitter sting of them, and that very night she burned her bridges behind her and went out alone into the world of whose hardness, selfishness, and cruelty she had known but a preliminary taste.

There was no longer bitterness in her memory of the speech which had angered her. She remembered every word he had said, with particular vividness the prediction he had made that, without training or practical knowledge of any one useful thing and practically a stranger in her own land, she would find open to her only the most menial of positions, or those where her beauty would be the only necessary qualification. The well-filled purse which rested in the bosom of her dress seemed a tangible refutation of the truth of that prediction; there was, after all, a place for her in the life of the great city, a place where the scouring of pots and pans, the hewing of wood and the hauling of water were not part of the task. But as she looked longer at the photograph the defiance faded from her eyes, for she remembered the one qualification he had made, that for her the sacrifice involved in following the broad and easy path of luxury would be impossible.

Doubts which she could not banish arose in her mind; doubts which emphasized the dubious details which Ware had so artfully glossed over; doubts which suggested that thorns of disappointment and disillusionment were concealed in the luxurious bed of roses of her vision. Under the influence of those doubts the touch of that purse against her flesh suddenly lost its comforting quality; it almost burned her; it seemed a menace rather than a protection, and she hastily withdrew it. Had Ware confronted her just then, even the compulsion of his masterful eyes would have been ineffectual to restrain her; she would have flung it in his face, but Fate was working at cross-purposes at that psychological moment and it was not Ware who opened the door without even the formality of knocking, but the hard-faced, slatternly landlady.

"You'll not forget that the rent was due yesterday, miss," she said, after satisfying herself with a quick, suspicious glance that the steamer trunk was in its customary place. "I heard you coming downstairs this morning, but you went out that quick I couldn't get speech of you."

Kathleen flushed. Payment of the rent that morning would have made the carrying of a pocketbook superfluous.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Jergan, but you know I've been looking for employment and—I've always paid you!"

Mrs. Jergan nodded a grudging assent.

"Did you land a job?" she asked suspiciously, noting the evidences of mental struggle in the girl's face.

"I—er—I hope to," answered Kathleen confusedly, for those suspicious eyes were merciless, and a quick mental calculation reminded her that the sum which she might legitimately call her own would fall short of satisfying the woman's legal claim against her. "I can pay you now a part of what I owe you," she continued hastily. "Perhaps—I hope—to-morrow I may find something. It's only a little that I am short and to-morrow——" She faltered, for there was hard, uncompromising refusal in the woman's expression.

"To-morrow—out you go, unless you pay up!" she interrupted harshly. "They's two girls waiting for the room this very night; girls as don't quarrel with their bread and butter and lose their jobs; honest girls as won't rob a poor woman, usin' her gas for cookin'!"

Kathleen flushed guiltily.

"Mrs. Jergan, you shall have every cent

that is due you; I only ask that you let a little of it go until I have a chance to——"

"Seein's believin'!" interrupted Mrs. Jergan, her eyes avariciously fixed on the pocketbook clutched in the girl's hand. "How much are you short, miss? If it's not too much, I'll take what you have now, but, remember, th' last of th' rest of it by noon to-morrow or—merciful heavens above! I'm not meanin' it, child; 'tis but th' bit of a joke I was carr'in' on with you!"

In desperation, in the longing to be alone for at least that one more night she might call the shabby room her own, Kathleen had opened the purse, resolved to sacrifice her last penny to purchase privacy and free herself from the woman's importunities. But one glimpse at the contents had produced a miraculous change in Mrs. Jergan's attitude; the roll of bills was large and each had a bright, yellow back.

"Sure, now, you must have known what I was meanin', an' us always so friendlylike," continued Mrs. Jergan quickly when Kathleen glanced at her, as relieved as surprised by the sudden change in her manner. She had opened the pocketbook mechanically without looking at it, forgetting for the moment the riches it contained. "I just climbed up to tell you that the front parlor will be empty to-morrow. Of course, you'll not be wantin' to keep this room, my dear; it's not fit for th' likes of a beautiful young girl like yourself!"

Kathleen continued to stare at her, still unconscious of the reason for the unexpected softening. And as she watched she saw another change come to the expression of that hardened face; into the eyes which had been cruelly exacting, then wheedlingly avaricious, came a furtive suggestion of evil cunning.

"And, listen, my dearie; it's th' decent name that Mary Jergan's house has always had, but I was young once meself an' it's th' tender heart I have for th' young folks," she continued, her tone oily and insinuating. "They's a private entrance to that front parlor, and it's th' grand room it is; fit to entertain th' best of your friends in. You'll be quite th' grand lady, an' your own mistress there, with no one to watch your comin' an' goin's, an' no one th' wiser of them as visits you."

In her preoccupation Kathleen did not catch the full meaning which the harridan meant to convey, but instinctively she recognized that it was evil; her eyes dropped in embarrassment and then she recognized in the roll of bills made visible by her mechanical and unconscious opening of the purse the true reason for the softening of Mrs. Jergan's adamantine front.

Than that, there could have been no clearer demonstration of importance of the choice which she must make and make speedily. If she refused the chance which Ware had offered her, the morning would find her without even the sanctuary of this miserable shelter, worse than penniless and, as a sudden faintness warned her, hungry. On the other hand, acceptance meant quick release from penury, for with that acceptance the money which had so impressed Mrs. Jergan became her own. There was no mistaking Mrs. Jergan's estimate of the situation. To her evil mind there was but one possible explanation of sudden riches appearing in the exhausted purse of a handsome, attractive young woman without visible means of support, and with the bitter cynicism born of recent experience she realized as she looked at that face, suddenly grown smiling, deferential and obsequious, that it typified the careless judgment of the world; tolerance of the means, so long as success crowned the ends.

But still Kathleen hesitated and temporized; she could not bring herself to taking actual physical possession of the money which would bind her irrevocably, overmastering as was her desire to rid herself of the woman's loathly presence. Watching her as keenly as Ware had watched her, Mrs. Jergan read plainly the indecision reflected in her face, but being a self-centered person with a narrow mental horizon, she had no conception of the real cause and, judging solely from her own limited outlook, she attributed the hesitation to the girl's inability to grasp at once the manifold advantages of the front parlor. With shaking hands Kathleen had emptied on the cot the money which had been in it before she met Ware, the last pitiful remnant of her savings, and, gathering up the insufficient total, she held it out.

"Until to-morrow, Mrs. Jergan—I'll get the rest of it to-morrow!" she said hurriedly. The woman looked at her shrewdly. For a moment she hesitated, but cupidity was strong within her and she clutched the money.

"Sure, I'm not uneasy about that, dearie;

seein' what I do!" she protested, her eyes fixed greedily on the roll of bills. "To-morrow we'll move you outa here, and it's glad I am that th' front parlor will be vacant, for it's sorry I'd be to lose you, an' with this——"

"To-morrow, to-morrow!" repeated Kathleen impatiently, almost pushing her toward the door in her eagerness to get rid of her, and when she had safely locked it after the woman's departure she turned and stood long without moving, her eyes fixed on the photographs upon the dresser. The purse, emptied of the last coin she could call her own unless she accepted Ware's offer, lay loosely in her hand as she gazed from one face to the other until they grew indistinct in the gathering dusk.

It was chance that the likeness of her father being closer to the window stood out more distinctly than the other in the last of the twilight. Perhaps because those easy-going, tolerant eyes met hers after the others were lost in the shadows, the grip of her fingers on the purse gradually tightened and, when darkness fell, with a movement which was almost surreptitious, although there was none to see, she quickly returned it to the security of her bosom.

Kathleen's hands in the darkness wandered about the dresser top and then, still in darkness, she unlocked and opened the lid of the steamer trunk. She locked it carefully before striking a match, and in the feeble light of the one small gas jet but one photograph looked at her, the handsome, weak, and tolerant face of her father.

The condemned criminal, relieved of uncertainty and suspense by the final refusal of pardon or reprieve, sleeps soundly the night before his execution. Kathleen Hempstead, her preparations for the last night under Mrs. Jergan's roof completed, turned off the gas, and on the hard, uncomfortable cot slumbered as peacefully as a child until awakened by the light of another day upon her closed eyelids.

CHAPTER III.

Kathleen slipped easily and naturally into her new environment. Ware, supremely confident of what her decision would be, had engaged a comfortable furnished apartment in an exclusive house for her, and Luce, baptized Elucidate Beauregard by immersion in the turbid waters of the Mississippi, acted as major-domo after attending to the minor details of moving her small personal belongings to it, much to the chagrin of Mrs. Jergan, who found him too sophisticated in the ways of lodging-house keepers to be imposed upon in the final settlement.

The single piece of luggage, the steamer trunk, remained unopened after its arrival; the scanty wardrobe which it contained would have been shamed by the flood of dainty lingerie, gowns, furs, and finery which poured into the new apartment in a bewildering stream. At least, that was the reason which Kathleen assigned for neglecting its contents, but in her heart she knew that she dreaded to raise the lid lest perchance in the darkness she had so placed the photograph that she would find herself looking into Devereux's face. She persistently assured herself that there was no reason why his eyes should cause her embarrassment, but, nevertheless, she was careful not to put it to the test.

Ware's attitude certainly gave her no cause to regret her decision. He was an absolute dictator without being in the least dictatorial, and the personification of courtesy and kindliness. There was not the slightest suggestion of anything but business in his lavish expenditure and generosity; it was only the extent of it which she found a trifle disconcerting. Even during her father's lifetime she had always been obliged to consider cost, whether it was expressed in pounds, francs, lire, rubles, or florins; since his death she had learned the value of pennies. In feminine fripperies she was an expert judge of values, and, after many startling demonstrations of his extravagance, she at last ventured to voice a protest. She wore the latest evidence of that extravagance at the time; feminine human nature could not have resisted the temptation to try it on, at least. It was a long coat of Russian sables with toque and muff of the same skins to match, and she wore it as few women could have worn it—as her reflection in the pier glass truthfully told her. Ware looked her over critically as he listened, his frank admiration as impersonal as if he had been appraising the beauties of a thoroughbred horse or the trim lines of a racing yacht.

"I don't see anything wrong with it, and I reckon it's worth the money," he said indifferently. "You can't catch flies with vinegar and we're not playing with a Hudson Bay seal proposition. The main thing in

a woman's dress is to have what she puts on her back look as if it just naturally belonged there; otherwise it's just a case of being all dressed up, and any fool with money enough can get that effect. Now, I never saw a live sable; I don't even know what one looks like; but I'll bet a nice red apple that those pelts look as natural on you as they did growing on the original owners. Anyway, I'm satisfied with the effect, so you should worry. So much for that. Now, how about the dress from Madame Bernhardt?"

Kathleen laughed as she slipped off the sables.

"You can judge for yourself," she said as she turned to face him, and Ware's black eyes fairly glistened. The dress which the sables had concealed was a masterpiece, and in it Kathleen was startlingly beautiful. It was black; the material a soft, heavy silk hanging in voluminous folds, so deftly draped that the artistry of the modiste was inconspicuous; so harmonious in line that without itself attracting attention it accentuated the beauty and grace of the woman who wore it. A single touch of color, a velvet rose so vividly red that it seemed almost a point of flame, intensified the natural red of her lips to carmine, just as the dead, lusterless black of the material brought out and accentuated the clearness and transparency of her ivory-white skin and the glossiness of heavy coils of black hair. Ware stared at her for a moment in silence—the plain admiration in his eyes would have made verbal expression of approbation superfluous—and then slowly drew a leather-covered case from his pocket.

"This will give it just the punch it needs, the only thing lacking," he said quietly as he opened the case, exposing a slender band of gold with a single large ruby in the center, a brilliant, flaming stone of the purest pigeon-blood color. Kathleen gave a gasp of astonishment and drew back when he held it out to her as casually as he would have offered a box of bonbons. Extravagant as his other purchases had been, they were at least within the bounds of reason. This, to her mind, was not.

"Are you laboring under the delusion that you can put over what I want you to get across with the fake get-up of a movie vamp?" he asked sarcastically before she could find words to voice the protest which was in her mind. "You are a winner as you stand, all right, but that don't go; at least, it don't go far enough, and the sky is our limit. We need more than that dress; that's got the daily hint from Paris skinned a mile, but we need more than that; something to appeal to the imagination as well as to hit the eye. The Oriental has been worked to a frazzle; the cheap glass-bead, streets-of-Cario variety, I mean; the real thing has never been touched and New York has something coming to it. Here, put this on!"

Kathleen took the bandeau, not without misgiving, and adjusted it about her forehead, slipping it on as she would have placed a coronet, the gold confining the loose coils of her hair. Ware shook his head as he viewed the result with critical eyes.

"There is something wrong; it isn't just the right effect, perhaps there is too much gold showing!" he said impatiently, his expression betraying that he attached a very great importance to it. The strained look on his face indicated an unusual and intense mental concentration. "Here, I see the trouble. You haven't fixed it right; you've put it on wrong. The ends of the band should be under, not over your hair!" he said jerkily, and as he spoke he reached up to her forehead. The movement was perfectly natural and Kathleen inclined her head just as naturally toward him, but she drew it back so suddenly that the jewel was torn from her forehead and remained in his hand. It was her first physical contact with Ware, and she gasped, almost screamed—for the finger tips which had touched her forehead were as cold as ice!

Ware made no verbal comment. He remained perfectly motionless, the jewel in his extended hand glowing like a fiery coal, but there was a curious expression in his black, beady eyes as he looked at her fixedly. In her own eyes there was sudden repulsion, then fear which gave way to a strange mixture of apprehension and defiance. She felt that she must escape and she stepped back, the first pace quickly, the second shorter and slower, the third hardly perceptible and then stood still, rigid, incapable of further retreat. Ware did not move a muscle, even his eyes were fixed; they seemed to impel hers to meet them without moving themselves, and in their depths there was a somber glow which might well have been a reflection of the smoldering fire in the heart of the jewel in those icy fingers.

Slowly every vestige of color vanished

from Kathleen's face and the repulsion and fear died from her eyes, leaving them fixed and expressionless. She felt the power of voluntary action lost, and as she mechanically took a step forward consciousness, too, followed it. Every movement was automatic, but her step was as firm and sure as that of the somnambulist who walks safely on the edge of a precipice.

"That's better; it will answer now!" It was Ware's voice, decisive, unusually harsh, which recalled her to herself. He was looking at her in the cool, critical, appraising way to which she had grown so familiar; in neither his bearing nor his expression was there the slightest suggestion that anything unusual had occurred; but the jewel which had been in his hand had disappeared and Kathleen was conscious of an unaccustomed weight and pressure on her forehead. A hasty glance in the mirror assured her that not only was the ruby there, but it was so perfectly placed and so firmly fixed that the adjustment must have been a matter of several minutes, at least; minutes which were an absolute blank to her and of which she retained not the slightest memory. She looked at him questioningly, the mingled doubt and terror in her mind plainly reflected on her face, but Ware was apparently oblivious to it.

"It's just the right touch and just enough —another jewel would spoil the whole effect," he continued before she could speak. "We must not overdo it, and we'll let it go at that for this costume; the pearls and other junk will be ready in a few days!"

Kathleen shuddered.

"Mr. Ware, there must be no pearls, nothing more; I simply can't go on with this!" she exclaimed nervously. "I did not know— I did not understand——"

"Pardon me, you will remember that this sort of thing was included in the details left to be arranged after you made your decision on the main proposition; I am quoting your own suggestion," he interrupted, his voice cold and decisive. "That main proposition you *did* understand, thoroughly, and you will remember that after making it quite clear to you I refused to let you decide until you had taken a night for reflection, although I was convinced that you would have answered affirmatively on the spot. I was, perhaps, overscrupulous; at any rate, I preferred that you should have time to think it over alone and that your decision should be deliberate and final, uninfluenced by argument or suggestion from me when you were making up your mind. I have stated the facts correctly, have I not?"

Kathleen hesitated. His eyes were fixed on hers, but there was no longer a suggestion of compulsion in them; they were the shrewd eyes of a keen bargainer, alert but not crafty.

"Y-es, that is literally true, I suppose," she admitted slowly and with evident reluctance. "Yes, I was alone, dreadfully alone when I decided; as alone as only a penniless girl, friendless and inefficient, in a great city can be. But, whether you intended it or not, I was not entirely free from your suggestion and influence, Mr. Ware; you will remember that you had given me money; forced it upon me."

Ware nodded. "A trifle," he assented.

"It may have been. I did not count it, but it was enough to produce an impression —unconsciously and reflexly upon me, perhaps. Mr. Ware, was that what you intended it to do when you slipped it into my purse?"

Never before had Kathleen seen such a smile on Ware's lips nor such a twinkle in his black eyes. They seemed to humanize him.

"I wasn't overlooking a bet, for I wanted you to cut in with me and, when I want a thing I go after it as hard as I know how; that's why I usually get it," he said frankly, slipping back into his easy vernacular. "You know the old saying that money talks. Well, perhaps I had a hunch that those bills might whisper to you and plead my case. See here, Miss Hempstead, I've had a good many hard things said about me in my day and I reckon I deserved most of 'em, but there is one thing I've never been accused of, and that's going back on the word I have passed. I made you a fair and square proposition; you had for sale something that I wanted, something you could sell without being ashamed to look at yourself in the glass. I'm speaking of brains— just the kind of brains I need in my business—and don't you forget for a minute that this *is* business with me. Your brains would have been of value in every one of the positions you lost if any one had taken the trouble to train you a bit, but there was always some pinhead in authority who was so dazzled by your beauty that he forgot business. I'll be perfectly frank with you,

I'm not underrating your beauty as a business asset, either; beauty and brains don't go together any too often; when I discovered that you had the unusual combination I made you a fair and square offer, take it or leave it. Of course, your acceptance may have been influenced by your necessities, but that's part of the business game. At any rate, you did accept and I planned accordingly. Now, how about it—you are not tempted to renege?"

"I am frightened into considering it very seriously," acknowledged Kathleen frankly. "You frighten me, Mr. Ware. Not as you are now. I can't explain it exactly, but the strangeness of things terrifies me. This jewel on my forehead, for example, I have no recollection that you fixed it there and yet you must have done it. Such oblivion is unnatural and uncanny. I was startled; your fingers were so cold—like ice—and then I remember nothing more."

Ware listened sympathetically. There was something singularly winning and kindly about him as he looked at her; a surprising revelation of a new side of his personality.

"Nerves—just plain frazzled nerves!" he said reassuringly as he extended his hand. "You mustn't give way to that sort of thing, young woman; it makes you put the cart before the horse and mix up cause and effect. Here, take my hand. Is there anything wrong with it?"

Kathleen had to summon all her courage to obey; it was her innate courtesy and fear of giving offense which conquered and, to her infinite relief, the hand which clasped hers was warm and comforting.

"Don't credit me with vices or virtues which I don't possess," he continued, smiling whimsically. "I've got the usual average of each, I suppose. I'm only human. You've been worrying about things, what you call my extravagance, for instance, until you've reached the condition of nerves where you see mountains in molehills. That explains what happened, Miss Hempstead. You hypnotized yourself. I've known that to happen before. I saw you looking at that ruby and it got you; that's one of the simplest and oldest stunts of mesmerism, or whatever the fakers call it. I thought you held mighty still while I was fixing the thing. I reckon that was the reason."

He laughed naturally and heartily, as he might have laughed away the unreasoning terror of a child.

"I'm not going to argue that point, or any other with you; I'm going to leave you alone to think it all over," he went on as he picked up his hat.

Kathleen's hands rose quickly to her forehead; his as quickly were raised in protest.

"No, don't take it off just yet!" he said, just a suggestion of his customary imperiousness tinging the protest which was made with still smiling lips. "Don't let what I have said about it frighten you. I want you to get used to it—and it to you; to look like the dress and the sables—as natural as if you were born to wear it. You've got to get used to a lot of things, Miss Hempstead; to me and my ways, for instance, and, believe me, you've got a whole lot to learn about the world yet!"

He slipped out of the room, still smiling at her, before she could protest further. It was the memory of that smile, kindly and reassuring, which prevented her from following the impulse to tear the jewel from its place; but Luce, who encountered Ware at the entrance to the building, gave an exclamation of dismay at sight of his face. The swarthy skin was livid, the black eyes set and beady beneath brows contracted as it from pain.

"Foh Gawd's sake, Mr. Ware, is yo'-all sick?" he asked solicitously.

Ware grasped him by the shoulders and stared into his startled eyes.

"Sick? Gad, no!" he answered hoarsely. "Scared, Luce; scared blue and pink. That girl's going me one better and getting away from me!"

Luce's black face expressed real concern.

"Quittin', aftah all th' dough yo'-all's blown in?" he exclaimed. "Now, that's shorely too bad, suh, an'——"

"Quitting? Hell, no!" interrupted Ware scornfully. "Didn't you size her up better than that? She would never have come to us if she had been able to satisfy the claim of that Jezebel of a landlady; but now she's had a taste of what real money brings she'll not cut loose from the bank roll with nothing but old Jergan, or something worse, to go back to, not when it means passing up sables, Bernhardt dresses, and pigeon-blood rubies. She thinks she might; I *know* she won't!"

"Then, for th' Lord's sake, what's worryin' yo', Mr. Ware?" asked Luce, for

Ware's face, which had resumed its natural color and expression as he voiced his cynical estimate of feminine weakness, again grew livid.

"Don't you get me?" he asked, his words hardly audible as he glanced furtively about. "She's getting away from me because she's the real thing—she's got the real gift, the thing I have always believed there was truth in but have never been able to prove, the thing I've been faking all these years and intended to teach her to fake. But she's got it, I tell you; got it big! Gad, she scared me to-day. She didn't know it herself; didn't know what had happened, and she was as scared as I was. Luckily, she didn't remember it, Luce, but she went off into a trance; nothing phony about it, believe me. And when she was in it she read what was in my mind as if it had been an open book—and I couldn't hold out on her! No harm done yet, Luce, for she didn't remember what she had read and spoken of in her trance after I awakened her from it, but—Gad! If she ever goes that one step farther and does remember!"

Luce suddenly wrenched himself loose from the grip on his shoulders. His black eyes were troubled, deeply troubled, and the finger which he raised in warning was tremulous.

"Then, Mr. Ware, yo'-all had bettah watch yo' step!" he exclaimed, the fingers of his other hand crossed. "I know. I married a wench with them gifts once, Juno Dessalaines, from Hayti. She was a bo'n voodoo, suh, an' she shorely done conjure me. They wa'n't rabbits foots in all creation enough to keep that hoodoo offen me; no, suh! Lan's sakes, Mr. Ware, I ain't jes' exac'ly honin' to monkey aroun' heah no mo'; no, suh!" He looked apprehensively at the entrance to the building, and Ware, quick to realize the danger of defection due to superstitious terror, pulled himself together.

"Don't be a fool, Luce!" he said harshly. "You get busy right now and see that Miss Hempstead is served with the best dinner she ever tasted. Get the finest flowers for the table and all that sort of thing. I want her to remember what the fat of the land and all the trimmings mean! And about that limousine—now, listen!"

And while Ware gave explicit directions to his sable retainer about upholstery and color schemes, Kathleen sat before the pier glass in her boudoir, her elbow on her knee, her chin resting on her hand, looking at the reflection which she hardly recognized as her own. Between the coils of dark hair and the delicately arched eyebrows the ruby glowed with a dull flame in its heart and, mindful of Ware's parting injunction, she watched it critically for a moment.

She realized how absolutely correct his judgment had been; she needed to get used to it and it to her. There was something in her face—still something—with which it did not harmonize and with a little shudder of fear she resolved that it was the stone which should give way. Slowly she raised the hand which lay idly in her lap toward her forehead, but it halted halfway. The movement reflected in the glass the wonderful lines of the exquisite dress which she wore, and she paused to admire it, as many a wiser woman would have done.

Heredity whispered to her in that moment of hesitation; the heritage of self-indulgence from the father whose handsome, careless, easy-going and tolerant face smiled at her from the mantel. With wistful eyes she looked about the daintily furnished room, at the exquisite sables lying on the couch, at the hundred and one tangible evidences of refinement and luxury to which she had so gladly returned. And then in the background rose the vision of that horrible, sordid room under the Jergan roof and the memory of the girl, daily shabbier when she left it, who returned to it night after night wearier and wearier from her struggle with the world.

There was no other picture on the mantel, no other suggestion to give her counsel, and slowly the muscles of her arm relaxed and let the hand fall back empty into her lap. She could not restrain a little gasp of fright as she looked again at the mirror—the reflection seemed almost a stranger to her. Beautiful it was, never before had Kathleen suspected how beautiful she might become, but the realization gave her no pleasure; it was a beauty which did not seem to belong to her. But it was not that strange sense of lost ownership in herself which brought the frightened gasp from her lips. It was the ruby, glowing red on her forehead, for something had gone from her face with the falling of that hand; something which had clashed with the fiery-hearted gem; something which vanishing left the ominously flaming jewel triumphant.

It was an answering exclamation from Luce which recalled her to herself. She saw his black face, admiration mingled with fear in its expression, reflected in the glass.

"Fo' th' lan's sake, Miss Kathleen, I cain't hardly believe yo'-all is th' same woman!" he said.

"That's hardly to be wondered at, for I am not, Luce," she said quietly as she rose from her chair and faced him. "The chrysalis you brought here from Mrs. Jergan's house has turned butterfly—the woman who held her body above all price has sold her soul to the devil!"

Luce backed away, the fingers of both hands crossed, and Kathleen laughed as she noticed the precaution.

"Wait a minute, Luce. I hardly meant that; certainly not literally," she said reassuringly. "I want you to do something for me. You remember that trunk you brought from Mrs. Jergan's; I need nothing that is in it here. Will you please take it away and store it?"

Luce assented with cheerful alacrity. He would have been glad of any excuse to get away from the look in those eyes. The trunk was not heavy, and a moment later he brought it on his shoulder from an inner room.

"Yo'-all is shore they's nuffin' yo' want outen it, Miss Kathleen?" he asked.

Kathleen hesitated. She even took a half step forward, but she stopped and, turning resolutely, surveyed herself in the mirror.

"Nothing, I am quite sure," she answered, the voice as strange in her ears as the reflection in the mirror to her eyes. "Sure, quite sure—but, for God's sake, hurry!"

CHAPTER IV.

The fight for the control of Monometal Common is the subject of one of the picturesque chapters in the history of Wall Street. Comparatively few people remember the first appearance of the stock on the market. The concern was one of such a multitude of combinations and consolidations launched in the early days of the twentieth century that only those unfortunates who bought at par and then saw the quotations quickly sag until their shares were worth little more than the paper they were engraved on bore it in sorrowful remembrance. The corporation was fathered by responsible and conservative men and, as the glowing prospectus showed, a thousand uses had been found for the new product, but, unfortunately, no sooner had the value of the metal in the arts been demonstrated than the unsuspected deposits in Germany were uncovered and worked so much more cheaply that America could not compete. The mines were shut down, and the stock so rarely appeared in market transactions that its very existence was almost forgotten, and the few shares which were occasionally offered by executors practically went begging.

Loftbury manipulated the campaign by which a trio of shrewd financial magnates—commonly known in the argot of the Street as the "Wholly Trinity," from their habit of grabbing everything good in sight—gained control of the stock, revivified the production and cleaned up millions; Loftbury, the best-known member of Loftbury & Senlis, one of the most prominent brokerage firms in America. Now, such a campaign requires for complete success that absolute secrecy which it is so difficult to maintain in the financial district where advance information commands a tremendous premium and hawk-eyed speculators watch every move of the big operators. It was carefully timed; it was to be launched on a day when the attention of the whole financial world was centered on the annual meeting of the directors of one of the greatest of the trusts; a meeting which would decide whether the semiannual dividend was to be passed, cut, or increased; a decision which would necessarily affect the whole market and lead to a volume of trading in which quiet acquisition of blocks of the long dormant stock would for a time escape attention.

No sale of Monometal had been recorded in several weeks, and naturally Loftbury & Senlis could not purchase it through their own office. They were known to be so closely associated with the financial powers that a simple inquiry by their representative on the floor of the Exchange would have attracted just that attention which it was so necessary to avoid before they could acquire any considerable holding. It was essential that their interest should remain unsuspected as long as possible and Loftbury was notoriously an adept in concealing from his right hand the doings of his left, and expert in every twist and turn by which he could cover his tracks. The quiet buying by straw men of small lots through

other and less conspicuous brokers was to begin at the opening of the Exchange on the third. At two in the afternoon of the second Senlis rushed unceremoniously into the private office of the senior member; a troubled look on his face, a slip of paper in his hand.

Senlis was the executive member of the firm. He managed the office details, circulated several times a day through the luxurious customers' room to encourage trading by exhibiting to the favored ones the rumors and gossip received over the firm's private wires, kept careful tab on all the margin accounts and scrutinized every order to buy or sell before it was transmitted to their floor representative.

"Lofty, this listens to me like a leak!" he said after carefully closing the door behind him. "Here's an order for a thousand Monometal Common, and there haven't been that many shares dealt in since the cat-and-dog clean up in nineteen-seven!"

Loftbury snatched the slip, one of the order blanks always ready to the hand in the customers' room, from his partner, and studied it for a moment in sullen silence.

"Who in blazes is J. Blackthorn Smith?" he exploded angrily. "That isn't real. There is some bunch of pikers hiding back of that moniker and trying to gum our game!"

"Oh, he's real enough; a real honest-to-goodness wild Westerner. I've seen him with my own eyes," answered Senlis. "New customer; Denver National opened up a small credit—fifteen thousand—for him last week with us, and he just drifted in with a card from the president, Dave Cathcart; drifted in and got busy right away. He's a queer-looking guy. I shouldn't have been surprised if he'd pulled a monte deck or the three little shells on me, but I was knocked silly when he handed in that buying order—he's buying it outright, you'll notice!"

"Sure, he would have to," said Loftbury irritably. "Even if any one smells a mouse, it shouldn't average him more than nine at the outside. I counted on getting fifteen thousand before it touched twelve and cleaning up control well under fifty. Did you talk with him?"

"Did I? Talk to a new customer introduced by Dave Cathcart? You bet I did!" exclaimed Senlis. "I'd liked to have sandbagged him when I saw that order slip, but, of course, I gave him the glad hand. Talked to him; why I talked to him like a Dutch uncle; tried to steer him off; suggested a lot of gilt-edged stuff and all the bag of tricks, but nothing doing, I might as well have talked to a cigar-store Indian. Tried to pump him, too, but didn't have any better luck there. If he told the truth, he doesn't know any more about Monometal than I do about milking a cow, and he doesn't know the rudiments of playing the market, either. Said he was afraid of margins, that he always wanted to see what he bought and that he was just buying this stuff on a hunch; he liked the name of it. Of course, that's all bunk, but—who spilled the beans?"

Loftbury shot a quick glance of suspicion at him and scowled as he shook his head.

"It can't be any one in this office—as you and I are the only ones who know there is anything on," he answered. "Did you try to find out anything from Cathcart?"

"Tried him on the private wire, but he left this morning for a week's shooting trip in the mountains. Smith's still in the customers' room, if you want to have a look at him."

Loftbury quickly rose from his desk, but he stopped on the way to the door to run the rapidly unwinding ticker tape through his fingers.

"Five hundred Monometal Common, eight," he mumbled. "Um, thousand Steel, ninety-eight; three thousand U. P., sixty-eight and a quarter; um—um, seventy-two; two hundred Monometal, eight and three-quarters; um—um—um—three hundred Mono, nine! Damn it, Senlis, why didn't you murder him? A full point on the first thousand and purchased through us. Great Godfrey! where will it jump to when the bunch opens up in the morning? Wait a minute—it's dollars to doughnuts that's Regan!"

He stepped into the sound-proof booth to answer the insistent ringing of the telephone bell and through the open door Senlis could hear his part of the conversation.

"Sure, I've seen it—yes—just going to find out! No, certainly not. Never heard of him before. New customer. Sure, he was properly introduced. We're not running a bucket shop. No, it wasn't; it was Dave Cathcart, of Denver. Yes, all set for to-morrow, but not a word has gone from this office yet; not a chance, not on your life!" He was grim as he left the booth.

"Regan's got his Irish up; saw the quotations and suspects that some one has double-crossed him, of course!" he snapped irritably. "Come on, Charley, let's have a look at this burglar before Tucker or Atkins get on the wire!"

In the customers' room a tall, slender man, swarthy of skin and with a thin, aquiline nose suggesting a predatory bird, a Mephistophelean mustache and goatee and long, black hair brushed straight back from a high, narrow forehead and falling almost to his shoulders, was stowing in a large, well-worn wallet a slip which he had just received from the cashier, a slip which Loftbury knew was a memorandum of the execution of that infernal order.

"Shake hands with my partner, Loftbury, Mr. Smith," said Senlis cordially. "Lofty, this is the friend of Dave Cathcart's that I spoke to you about."

"How's my old friend, Dave?" asked Loftbury as Smith turned a pair of piercing black eyes on him and acknowledged the introduction with a nod. Both of his hands were busy with his wallet, and he didn't seem to notice the one which Loftbury had half extended.

"I reckon he's all right—he usually is," answered Smith laconically. "Tough old boy, Cathcart."

"He treats 'em rough when he breaks into the market," assented Loftbury. "Taking a little flyer at it yourself, Mr. Smith?"

"He's not looking for quick action, the way Dave always does. He's picked a dead one, Loft!" laughed Senlis as Smith nodded. "Dead and buried—I'll bet you don't even remember it—Monometal?"

"You lose, Senlis," answered Loftbury dolefully. "I was one of the chief mourners at that funeral; I got caught with a lot of other suckers when the bottom dropped out. That pipe dream cost me about fifty thousand. I'd like to get back at it if there's anything doing with the corpse. Are you playing inside information, Mr. Smith?"

"No, hunch," replied Smith curtly. "I don't know anything about this game, but I seem to be having beginner's luck. She's jumped a point already."

Loftbury laughed good-naturedly. A score of customers who were ostensibly absorbed in the fluctuations of the market as recorded on the blackboard, which covered one end of the room, by a youngster who flitted back and forth so nimbly that he seemed to have winged shoes, were in reality listening with strained ears. Anything resembling a tip from Loftbury would be worth picking up.

"That's easily accounted for, Smith," he explained patronizingly. "It went up on your order to buy at the market; a thousand-share order on a dead one always does that. The stock market works on a hair trigger. Why, if some sucker came into the market with an order for another thousand it would probably jump to ten—perhaps higher. But when you tried to unload—good night!"

Smith listened with flattering attention, his eyes fixed on Loftbury's face.

"That's right, I reckon," he drawled. "I'm not thinking of unloading, so that don't worry me, and I believe I'll just bump her up another peg with a second thousand."

Loftbury laid a protesting hand on his arm as Smith turned to pick up a pad of order blanks. He would willingly have given a cool ten thousand from his own pocket rather than have Loftbury & Senlis' floor representative purchase an additional thousand of that long dormant stock. He might even have taken a chance and "bucketed" the deal, but not only Smith, but all the firm's customers in the room would watch the board for a record of the transaction, and it would have been too risky. Even Loftbury & Senlis dared take no chances with the governors of the Stock Exchange.

"Hold on, Smith!" he protested. "I'm afraid that you didn't understand what I was driving at. I didn't mean that that stock would be worth any more, but, as a purely speculative——"

"I got you all right," interrupted Smith, as he glanced at the clock and then hastily wrote his order. The partners exchanged a quick glance as he handed it to the cashier.

"Just a minute, Mr. Smith!" exclaimed Senlis, reaching through the wicket and taking the paper. "You understand that we should not care to carry a stock of this character on margin, and I believe—er—that your balance will hardly cover this order. Of course, if you care to wire for additional funds——"

Smith looked at the clock. It was two-forty-five, a fact which Senlis had already noted.

"Forget it!" he said curtly as he reached for his hip pocket and produced a roll of

bills. It was a large one, and he stripped off ten, each of the denomination of a thousand dollars. Senlis had the uncomfortable feeling that those black eyes were boring into his brain, and he rather welcomed the opportunity to turn his back as he initialed the slip and passed it through the wicket, but Loftbury returned to the attack; if he couldn't prevent the damage, he might at least minimize it.

"We don't often advise our customers, Mr. Smith, but we hate to see one take a loss, especially a new and—er—inexperienced one and a friend of Dave Cathcart's," he said. "As you are buying this stuff outright, I presume it is for investment, and there are a number of dividend paying securities which would, in our judgment, be——"

"I'm not looking for that kind, Mr. Loftbury!" interrupted Smith. "I told you that I was playing a hunch, and I've got a strong one that Monometal is going to wake up; that there will be something doing when the public remembers it. If I'm making a bad guess, I'll not hold you responsible—look there, she's jumping again!"

The Mercury with the chalk had recorded a new quotation, "Mono, nine and one-half," to be quickly followed by another "nine and one-half," and, almost as quickly, by a final "nine and five-eighths." Loftbury's answering laugh was derisive. It was meant for the ears of the other customers, as were his subsequent remarks. It was too late to restrain this maniac who threatened to upset his carefully laid plans, but he would do his best to minimize the damage. The listening customers would surely carry the news far and wide and he preferred to edit it.

"Of course she's jumping—that's under the spur of your second order, Smith," he laughed. "Look here; there isn't a piker in the market who hasn't noticed those sales, and before the opening to-morrow the whole Street will know that our firm did the buying. That will make a little flurry; the small fry will follow what they believe to be the lead of the big fish, and I shouldn't be surprised to see that old has-been boosted another two or three points before the market gets wise. Of course, you haven't got much, and if you are quick enough on the trigger you might unload while the unloading's good and take a small profit. Do you want to put in a selling order—say at eleven?"

Smith's eyes were fairly beady as he kept them fixed on Loftbury. Hundreds of men had watched him during financial crises and trying days on the Street—as the intimate associate of the Wholly Trinity he was worth watching—but no one had ever grown much wiser from scrutiny of his imperturbable face. He had always been conscious of that observation, but never before had he encountered eyes which made him uncomfortable and vaguely uneasy. He was relieved when the delayed answer came, although it was not the one he had hoped for.

"I reckon that I'll just let her go as she lays, Mr. Loftbury. I'm not looking for chicken feed, and it won't break me if I have to use those shares for wall paper," drawled Smith carelessly. "I'll be around to-morrow to take 'em over, and if there are any more lying around on the bargain counter I may be tempted to pick 'em up."

Loftbury rarely appeared in the customers' room, and those rare visits were of the briefest, but he lingered for a moment after Smith settled his broad-brimmed sombrero on his head and disappeared. He could have wished for no better means of publicity than the score of men who, now that the Exchange had closed for the day, would leave and scatter the story of the curious new customer broadcast. Skillfully managed, the story might even prove useful in covering the tracks which he intended to make on the following day.

"Who's the wild and woolly stranger in our midst, Loftbury?" asked Hazel, a weazened, shrewd-faced little man who was always looking for stray bits of useful information.

"I'm betting he won't be quite so woolly after he gets through playing hunches," answered Loftbury with a cynical laugh and a shrug of his shoulders. "He may get away with it this time, at that, if he wakes up sane in the morning. Of course, that sucker play will make a flurry in the market; a buy like that through this firm won't get past the tipsters, and they'll make the pikers believe that some of you wise guys are playing inside information. If he unloads quick enough he may get out with his skin. Any of you boys tempted to back his hunch?"

The derisive laughs and chuckles of his hearers sufficiently answered his question. At most it would be only a pikers' flurry, and Loftbury & Senlis' customers were not

in that class. Loftbury was wise enough to let well enough alone, and he switched the subject to the problematical action of the board of directors.

"Of course, if they increase the dividend, it will give a boost to all of the Industrials," he said oracularly. "You mustn't take this as official, but I've an idea that is just what they are going to do; I've heard that they've just closed a big foreign contract. There ought to be a real kick to the market tomorrow. Why, it may even boost Monometal to twelve—which would be going some." He laughed as he concluded and passed through the swinging door.

No one who saw Loftbury dining with a famous stage beauty as his guest of honor that evening, or who heard his hearty laughter from his box at the first performance of a clever farce in which she was the star, would have suspected that for an hour he had been the storm center in a heated argument with three angry capitalists in the private office of the irascible Regan. In the gay life of metropolitan bohemia, Loftbury was as conspicuous a figure by night as he was in the serious financial world by day. A bachelor, handsome, rich, of good family and with a tremendous and world-wide acquaintance, there was no social circle to which he was denied the entrée, but he found his chief enjoyment in the unconventional, unexacting companionship of attractive professional women whose occupation permitted liberties denied their less fortunate sisters. He was not a tuft hunter, but he was intensely curious, eager to get the last ounce of enjoyment from life, jealous lest he should miss a possible new sensation. His organization for pleasure was as complete as that for business, his little dinners were famous, and few of the interesting personalities drifting through New York departed without pleasant memories of his hospitality.

Loftbury usually left his business behind him when he locked his desk, but in spite of his care-free manner and untroubled face, he was not entirely happy that night. J. Blackthorn Smith had irritated and piqued him, and he could not get him out of his mind. Loftbury gloried in a contest of wits with his fellow professionals, but it was unheard-of for a rank outsider to step in from nowhere and forestall his moves in the game; it was an intrusion which he would not brook. The private advices on the political situation in Europe to the Wholly Trinity warned of coming events which even the financial world would not suspect for several days; events which would cut off the German supply of Monometal to outside markets and create an unheard of demand for that peculiar product for which nothing could be substituted in the manufacture of ordnance supplies.

It must have been a pure accident. It was inconceivable that this freak of humanity whose appearance reminded him of the itinerant fakers who sell patent medicines from wagons lighted by flaming gasoline torches, or the wandering magicians who draw rabbits and goldfish from silk hats in the cheaper vaudeville houses, could have surprised the secret locked in the breasts of the omnipotent trio for whom he acted. So carefully had it been guarded that even Senlis believed that the operation was just one of the ordinary manipulations by which that trio would make a quick clean-up and leave the gullible public holding the bag, an operation similar to a dozen others which they, as agents, had managed.

And during the few succeeding days before the great storm broke and the speculative world awakened to the realization that the sensational rise in the despised Monometal Common was justified by the inevitable law of supply and demand, the mysterious new customer who haunted the office from the opening to the closing of the Exchange worried him more and more. Although a confessed amateur, he proved an apt pupil in speculative methods, keeping his own counsel and playing the game as boldly as a lion, but with the wariness of a fox and the cunning of a mink. As the stock rose under the Wholly Trinity's secret buying orders, at first by fractions, then by points and finally by leaps and bounds, he pyramided, but never quite to the point where his margin was narrow enough to be wiped out by the dumping of a large block of stock on the market or the circulation of depressing rumors. Loftbury watched for such an opportunity, but it never came and finally the soaring price got beyond his control.

The investing as well as the speculating public awaked to the possibilities and the market demand was too solid to make manipulation a safe game for men to whom it was essential to get a controlling interest of the stock. In the end it skyrocketed to a value approaching the fictitious, but just

before the trio acquired the last shares necessary to give them a majority, J. Blackthorn Smith closed out with better than a quarter of a million dollars to his credit on the books of Loftbury & Senlis.

Loftbury smiled grimly as he totaled his own share of the profits in that sensational and successful operation. It was large, but not large enough to make the slice which the outsider had appropriated negligible, and there was a vicious glint in his eyes as he looked across the desk at his partner.

"Charley, we can't afford to let that thug get away with it, that isn't according to Hoyle!" he said irritably. "Sucker luck won't win twice, and I'll trim him if it takes a leg. First, we've got to get a line on him."

Senlis shrugged his shoulders.

"Go to it, if you know how!" he answered. "Cathcart can't tell us anything about him. He made a deposit in gold, and a few days later asked for an introduction to a reliable brokerage firm and Dave sicked him on us. You say that the sleuths Regan and his side kickers put on his trail haven't been able to dig up anything about him. Jerry Caruthers swears he's a guy that used to pull teeth to music out at French Lick, but, of course, that's just Jerry's usual bunk. I've watched him in the customers' room. He never put a pencil to paper except to write an order, but he knew to a copper just how he stood every minute, and, darn his hide, every time he fixed those snake eyes of his on me I felt as if he knew everything that I did, too—and we never caught him so spread out that we could cut the props out from under him. Good luck to you, if you want to get after his scalp, but I'm not going to embitter my sweet young life. He gets on my nerves!"

"He's got my goat—that's worse!" exclaimed Loftbury as he gathered up the loose papers he had been figuring on and tossed them on the glowing logs in the fireplace—the confidential agents of the Wholly Trinity did not believe in wastebaskets. "Monometal Common is a happily closed incident, but there are others, and I'll have something framed to take a fall out of that highwayman when he shows up to-morrow."

But Loftbury was doomed to another disappointment, for J. Blackthorn Smith did not show up. Instead, there came a sight draft covering his entire credit balance from the Industrial Trust, one of the many banks controlled by Regan. That tinctured the disappointment; it would be simple to trace the money to its final destination, for the books of the bank held no secrets from him. But for the second time in that same day Loftbury got a jolt, not much lighter than the one the paying teller at the Industrial received when J. Blackthorn Smith quietly drawled a request for the entire proceeds of the draft in currency. He had to go to the vault to get the money, and he availed himself of the opportunity to whisper the news of the unusual request to the cashier, who promptly transmitted it over a private wire to Regan. Smith was so obviously not a New Yorker that the teller was tempted to say a word of warning as to the danger of carrying such an amount of money about the great city, but there was something in the expression of the curious black eyes which stared at him through the barred wicket which froze him into silence.

Smith quickly stowed the crisp, new bills —ten-thousand-dollar gold certificates do not become soiled and worn in general circulation—in an inner pocket and strolled out into the noonday crowd of Nassau Street, but it was easy for the two skillful trailers whom a word from Regan had put on his track to follow him, for he was an unusual and conspicuous figure in that hustling throng.

"He's got an eye for chickens, all right, Bill," said one to the other from the corner of his mouth as he saw the black eyes of the man they were following glance sharply and appraisingly at every feminine face he passed. "It'll be a cabaret for ours to-night at the old man's expense—the orders are to stick until he's bedded down and then telephone for a relief." A little later he revised his prediction, much to his disappointment, for standing at J. Blackthorn Smith's elbow at the counter of the Pennsylvania ticket office he heard him purchase a ticket and reserve a drawing-room for Chicago on the night express. That was a comforting reflection a few minutes later when Mr. Smith, strolling along with no hint of haste in his leisurely walk, suddenly stepped into the one taxi in sight and disappeared before they could find another to follow him.

That evening they waited patiently at the train wicket from the time it opened until the final "All aboard!" signaled imminent departure. They looked at each other

sheepishly and used bad language as the gate slammed, for in the train, pulling swiftly out of the station, there was an unoccupied drawing-room and J. Blackthorn Smith, who had paid for it, had disappeared forever from the ken of Regan, his sleuths and the frequenters of the customers' room of Loftbury & Senlis from which he had taken a small fortune.

CHAPTER V.

Loftbury waited impatiently for Smith's reappearance. He never for a moment doubted that he would come back, for in his long and intimate acquaintance with the Street he could remember no precedent for a man retiring after a single killing. But days grew to weeks, weeks to months, and, finally, to a year—a particularly crowded year it was for Loftbury & Senlis—and the anxiously watched-for man made no sign. Not only that, even the far-flung lines of secret intelligence at the command of the Wholly Trinity failed to discover the faintest trace of him. From the moment he eluded Regan's trailers by stepping into a taxi with his booty safely stowed in his pocket, he slipped back into the obscurity from which he had emerged when he opened an account at the Denver National by dumping several buckskin bags filled with gold dust and nuggets through the teller's window.

But outwardly Loftbury betrayed no sign of his irritation and pursued the even tenor of his usual life, rolling up money during the day, expending it free-handedly in any way that contributed to his comfort and pleasure out of business hours. Every worth-while celebrity of the class he affected who visited New York was his guest at one or another of his charming dinners; he occupied his box at every noteworthy first night and his handsome, florid, and smiling face was always in evidence at the ringside at the important sporting events. Just as their branch offices and correspondents throughout the financial world watched for opportunities and carefully steered desirable business to the New York office of the firm, did volunteer social scouts cater to his enjoyment. Loftbury never dined alone, rarely without charming feminine companionship, and as a rule he carefully avoided mixing pleasure and business.

Naturally there had to be exceptions to that rule, and it was one of those exceptions which accounted for his dining with Regan as his sole guest at Fragonard's in that particular room where tables were always engaged weeks in advance—when any but the chosen few approved of by Otto, the despotic maître-d'hôtel, attempted to make a reservation. In fact, entrance to that room was, in the eyes of the socially aspiring, almost a cachet; the Americans who frequented it had, at least, a bowing acquaintance with each other, and the occasional foreigners were invariably people of distinction in their own countries. Otto was reputed to be as familiar with the Almanach de Gotha as with that invisible but strictly drawn line which separates the sheep from the goats in the social life of New York.

Therefore, there were few surprises in dining at Fragonard's if one had the entrée to the inner sanctuary. One might be pretty sure of seeing at adjoining tables no one whose name was not headliner in the society columns, a celebrity in the artistic or literary world, or foreigners whose titles or talents gave them assured position in their own countries. With the tact and suavity of a trained diplomatist, Otto attended to that, and his word was law; as one matron whose position was so assured that she dared say just what she pleased had summed it up after critically surveying the assembled guests through her lorgnette: "Otto certainly has the highest standard of manners and the most accommodating judgment of morals of any of the people who make life agreeable and easy for us!" with, of course, a significant emphasis upon the final pronoun.

There was a table available for Loftbury, although he sent word only at the last minute, and for hours previously Otto had almost tearfully explained to one after another of would-be diners how desolated he was that every table in the Colonial Room had been engaged for days. And at the dinner hour the appearance of the room certainly bore out that statement; after Loftbury and Regan took their seats there remained but one unoccupied table, that most desirable one in the corner farthest from the stringed orchestra, which gave a measure of privacy and still afforded an unobstructed view of the other tables. Loftbury knew everybody in the room, from Mrs. van Sturtevant, whose careless nod of recognition as he entered testified to his own posi-

tion, to Bobby Lejeune, who cadged his meals as a professional society buffoon.

It was a charming dining room; there were perhaps a score of tables and, as it was to be a gala night at the opera for the benefit of a popular and fashionable war charity, the women who would later appear in the boxes of the Diamond Horseshoe were in full panoply of décolleté and jewels, while scattered at the various tables were a half dozen men in brilliant uniforms; officers of the Allied armies detailed to the country which, still officially neutral, was unofficially their real base of supplies. Loftbury's choice of companionship was not voluntary; it had been dictated by business necessity, for Regan had the skeleton plan of another market operation in his mind. He would far rather have been at one of the other tables, better still, at the one still unoccupied with Trixie Tricastle, the clever and amusing Irish girl who alternately made her great audiences weep with her pathos and laugh with her inimitable comedy. There was a certain charming informality in the Colonial Room; an occasional interchange of chaff between people at adjoining tables who called each other by their first names with surprising frequency. At every table there was animated, easy conversation and laughter; the friendly, intimate intercourse of people leading the same lives, interested in the same things, meeting day after day and night after night in the same environment.

Regan was, in a way, a discordant note. Unlike Loftbury, he was unable to leave business behind him when he left his office. One of the wags of the Street asserted that he was forced to do his own washing for fear his laundress might decipher the calculations which, for want of a convenient scribbling pad, he was in the habit of making on his cuffs when he was in evening dress. When he talked earnestly, even upon indifferent topics, there was a hard, metallic ring in his voice suggestive, as Loftbury said to himself, of the chink of coins as they flowed into his coffers. Fortunately it was low-pitched that evening; even Regan was susceptible to those surroundings, and he was giving information to his confidential broker which was not meant for other ears. Loftbury was wise enough to accept the inevitable gracefully, and to make a virtue of necessity.

He listened attentively as Regan unfolded the proposed plan of campaign which he would have to carry out—a campaign even more important than that through which the Wholly Trinity had gained control of Monometal, and, while every word came distinctly to his own ears, not one of them was audible three feet beyond the edge of the table across which they talked. The laughter and conversation at the other tables helped to mask that business monologue, and the soft strains from the stringed orchestra concealed behind a screen of palms made a curious obbligato for a topic so exotic in the atmosphere pervading Fragonard's.

"And it's up to you to see that there will be no such slip-up as the last one, when that Denver cut-up beat you to it and almost spoiled the market for us," warned Regan grimly.

Loftbury's eyes betrayed his annoyance as he glanced quickly across the table; it was bad enough to have an evening spoiled by the intrusion of business, it was even more unpleasant to have that unpleasant incident recalled, and Regan's tone was irritating. And, too, for the first time that evening his words must have been audible to other ears, for the orchestra had ceased playing and a strange silence had fallen over the other tables. For a moment he found that annoying without attaching especial significance to it; those curious periods of silence, inexplicable in their causes, often occur to punctuate the flow of table talk.

He answered Regan's warning with an impatient shrug of his shoulders and glanced quickly at the adjoining table to see if its occupants had overheard and attached significance to the irritating remark. For a moment he could hardly believe his eyes, for not only at that table but at all of the others there was a betrayal of something verging on bad manners, an unheard-of demonstration of curiosity in Fragonard's Colonial Room! Those guests who were seated so that they commanded a view of the entrance door were frankly staring toward it, others had turned their heads, a few even half turned their bodies, to follow the gaze of those more fortunately placed. Even Mrs. van Sturtevant's expression betrayed a surprising curiosity as she stared through her jeweled lorgnette, and Bobby Lejeune failed to get a laugh by fashioning imitation field glasses from his effeminate hands. Loftbury carelessly followed their lead, oblivious to the very evident displeasure of Regan

at his sudden lack of interest—and in a moment he had even forgotten that eminent capitalist's presence.

The doorway framed a most unusual and startling picture, a woman who seemed absolutely out of place in those most conventional surroundings and yet conveyed a subtle impression that it was the surroundings and not herself which furnished the incongruity. There were many beautiful women in the restaurant, but there was not one among them who was not in full and conventional evening dress, décolleté and translating the last word of Parisian modistes in cut and color schemes, and many of them were fairly blazing with jewels of fabulous value.

The woman in the doorway was clothed in black—and the word clothed, is used advisedly, for the soft, rich material of the gown covered her slender, graceful body to the neck and left only a few scant inches of white forearm exposed below the loose, flowing sleeves. Her face was classical in outline; the transparent, ivory-white skin destitute of the slightest suggestion of natural or artificial color, but the natural vivid red of her lips testified that the lack of color in the face was not due to impaired circulation. The wrists and tapering fingers of the long, slender hands were destitute of ornament, the somberness of the gown falling in long, full lines was broken by a single touch of color, a red rose at the joining of the soft girdle which caught it loosely at the waist. In the center of her low, broad forehead was her single jewel; a flaming, pigeon-blood ruby, so skillfully set that the slender band of gold which held it was almost invisible, even before it disappeared beneath the mass of simply arranged dark hair.

She stood there just long enough for Otto to slip deferentially past her to lead the way to that one unoccupied table, following him with an easy, graceful walk, apparently oblivious to the sensation her appearance had created; in fact, she might have been the only occupant of the room for all her calm, confident eyes betrayed of consciousness that she was not. Loftbury watched her as intently as the others as she swept gracefully down the broad center aisle between the tables. For a moment he found her presence additional cause for irritation, for it indicated that some cog in his own carefully devised machinery must have slipped. She was undoubtedly a personage; that particular angle in Otto's expressive spine never appeared for anything much below royalty—and she was not only in the holiest holy of Fragonard's; she was being conducted as if through undisputed, inalienable right to the most desirable place in it and he—Loftbury!—was not only unwarned of her coming, he had never even guessed of her existence. And, in spite of that, he was probably the only one in the room who did not see her take the place reserved for her—Mrs. van Sturtevant even noted that she sat down carelessly, absolutely assured that the chair drawn back for her by the obsequious Otto would be exactly where it should be at the instant it was needed.

But Loftbury for the moment had even forgotten her presence. He saw only the man who had accompanied her into the room, walking at her left, a half pace back. He was tall and slender, swarthy of skin, and with a thin, aquiline nose which gave his face a strange likeness to a predatory bird. His closely cropped hair *en brosse,* his carefully waxed mustache and pointed imperial were snow white. His conventional evening clothes were perfectly cut; to the experienced eye they claimed the origin of Bond Street, but his flat back, erect carriage, and the poise of his head gave one the impression that his broad shoulders were more accustomed to the feel of a military tunic and the burden of shoulder straps. But it was the eyes beneath the straight, aggressive eyebrows which caught and held Loftbury's gaze; eyes as black as jet, piercing as a hawk's, as cold and beady as those of a rattler; it was a year since Loftbury had seen such eyes, but for all those months they had been a disagreeable, irritating memory. With a muttered exclamation he half rose from his chair as the man drew nearer and, perhaps because his was the only conspicuous movements among the guests, those eyes turned toward him, meeting his frankly and steadily for a moment before turning indifferently away without betraying the slightest sign of recognition.

A moment later the visible evidence of the sensation disappeared and the customary atmosphere of the restaurant returned. The laughter was perhaps a trifle louder, the conversation more animated, but there was undoubtedly a subtle undercurrent of questioning beneath the surface. Otto, the universal fountain head of information, was inacces-

sible; it was impossible for even Mrs. van Sturtevant to catch his eye, so absorbed was he in supervising the service of the deft waiters at the corner table; a solicitude of which the woman and her companion, chatting together in subdued voices were apparently as oblivious as they were to the furtive or brazenly frank curiosity of the assembled company. They tacitly accepted the one as a matter of right; the other as a matter of course. Loftbury summoned the captain responsible for the service of his own table with an imperative gesture.

"What's the answer, Jean; who are they?" he snapped out.

The shrug of Jean's shoulders was eloquent.

"Ah, Monsieur Loftbury, zat is ze question I have ask myself, but I, Jean, who haf sairved ze royalty and ze nobility in Paris, in Londres an' Petersbourg, cannot find myself ze ansaire."

"Royalty and nobility be damned!" exclaimed Loftbury irritably as Jean whisked himself away in response to another summons. "Regan, if that white-headed pirate all dolled up for a moving-picture disguised major general isn't that highbinder, J. Blackthorn Smith, I'll eat my hat!"

"You'd better eat that filet first, if you're that hungry; Bearnaise sauce doesn't improve with age," answered Regan, for Loftbury had apparently forgotten the main purpose with which one ordinarily visits a restaurant. "You're seeing things, Lofty. I had a good look at your friend when he was pouching the money he robbed us of and he wasn't a bit like it. This chap does look a little like a pirate, but not a bit like your wild and woolly Westerner who walked into your office, sandbagged us out of a quarter of a million, turned around and walked right out again, instead of waiting to be sheared like the innocent lamb you took him for. By the way, have you ever been able to guess how he got an inkling that there was a hen on the Monometal eggs?"

Loftbury shook his head.

"No more of an idea about that than you have of where he came from, or where he went after he dodged your flat-footed, fat-headed gumshoes," he answered. "I always believed that he did get one. I never took any stock in that hunch story, and his reappearance just now strengthens that belief. We took things too much for granted before. Dave Cathcart sent him to us; his long hair, sombrero, and the rest of the make-up did the rest. We took him for a wild West product—that time."

"Well," prompted Regan when Loftbury paused and glanced about the room.

"What do you suppose about ninety-five per cent of these people size that couple up for right now?" asked Loftbury, emphasizing his question with a significant gesture toward Jean. "Ze royalty an' ze nobility!" he mimicked scornfully. "Just because they're wearing the clothes and making the bluff, and Otto is breaking his back for them. New York is easy—up-town and down-town."

"How about the other five per cent—the wisenheimers?" asked Regan with a grin which plainly expressed incredulity.

"One of whom, I'm which!" answered Loftbury. "I can't answer that right now, Regan, but I'll be able to before I'm much older. There's something doing—something in the wind which is out of the ordinary, or that man wouldn't have come back with this kind of a brass-band flourish, and I'm going to get to the inside of it before it's pulled off. I don't claim to be a wisenheimer, Regan, but no hornet is going to sting me twice in the same place and get away with it. By Jove, the woman certainly is a stunner!"

Regan looked at him curiously for a moment before answering. He was the only guest in the restaurant who seemed to be taking the unusual intrusion as a personal matter.

"Lofty, you're a queer specimen in some ways," he said slowly. "Tell me, what would you have given to have been in that chap's place when they came into the room? What would you give to be with the woman now, with half the room asking 'Who's the latest queen with Loftbury?' instead of——"

"I don't get you!" interrupted Loftbury coldly, but his face flushed and Regan smiled.

"No? Oh, very well; let it go then. Every man to his taste, but I hope the taste for the kind of pleasures which appeal to you won't interfere with the business which is our common interest," said Regan, the metallic quality again in evidence in his voice. "By the way, do you care to look in at the Metropolitan to-night? Mrs. Van blackjacked me into buying a box—I'll have to get busy in the Street if these social highwaywomen don't stop holding me up for

their pet charities—and I believe Trixie Tricastle is one of the volunteers."

The implication was unmistakable, but Loftbury did not resent it.

"Yes, I know she is; I have an engagement to take her to supper afterward," he answered, a touch of defiance in his voice.

Regan smiled and looked at the woman at the other table. She was talking earnestly with her companion, but her voice was so low that the curious listeners near her could not even distinguish the language she used.

"I am wondering," said Regan quietly, "how long after a new claimant appears, Trixie will retain her hold on the fickle—public?"

Loftbury ignored, although he had not missed, the significant pause before the last word.

"My dear Regan, if you'll join us at supper and meet her personally after seeing her across the footlights, you'll agree with me, I think, that she will not be easily deposed."

Regan glanced again at the corner table.

"Perhaps you are right, but possibly because your absurd identification reminds me of something else, I have a hunch that it won't be very long," he said dryly.

Loftbury's glance followed his; it met no answering glance from the woman, but he found himself gazing into eyes as cold and beadlike as a rattler's, eyes that met and held his without betraying the slightest sign of interest and yet seemed to be boring into his inner consciousness. They held his, to the exclusion of everything else from their vision, but Regan watched the woman and for the first time since she entered the room he saw her evince the slightest interest in anything but her immediate surroundings. She was watching Loftbury, not with the cool, impersonal scrutiny with which she had indifferently met his own admiring glance, but with the eager, undisguised interest that a naturalist might display in examining some strange and unfamiliar specimen. Almost mechanically the cuff seemed to shoot out of his left sleeve and with a small gold pencil he scribbled something on it. He had evolved a cabalistic system of stenography so peculiarly his own that no one else could possibly decipher it, but he quickly snapped the cuff back into place when Loftbury turned his face again to the table.

"Great Scott, Regan, don't you ever forget business?" he demanded irritably as he noted the familiar trick of his companion.

Regan grinned sheepishly and shook his head.

"When I've made a note of something important I can dismiss it from my mind until it's time to act on it, sure that it won't slip my memory," he explained as he returned the pencil to his pocket. "It's a valuable habit; at least, I've found it so, Lofty, and now that I've cleared the decks we can get back to that other little matter. Tucker and Atkins both agree with me that we want to be ready to jump in at any minute. The stock has been sagging steadily, and if through your office we feed out a couple of thousand shares in small lots it will bear——"

"Oh, cut it out!" protested Loftbury, shooting a quick, furtive glance at the corner table. "This isn't the place to go into details!"

"But it was just for that that we are dining together!" answered Regan sharply. "What's the matter with you, Lofty? You're as cross as a bear with a sore head!"

"Make it as wary of the fire as a burned child and you'll come closer to the truth, Regan!" corrected Loftbury nervously. "See here, I don't want to talk of that thing here; I'll go further than that. I don't want even to think of it with those infernal snake eyes looking at me—even at the back of my head; not until I've had a chance to find out what the game is."

"You still persist in your identification?"

Loftbury nodded.

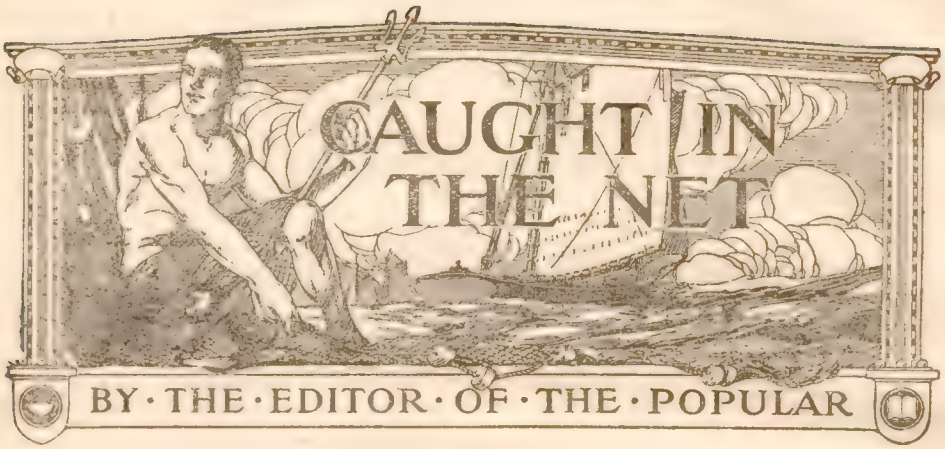
"I'm sure enough of it to be careful, and I'm not taking chances," he said quietly. "You'll have coffee?"

"Yes, but I still don't see anything to be scared of in talking over a business deal here, Loft," answered Regan, smiling. "Do you know, I shouldn't be surprised if you had a run-in with that chap—call it another run-in if you stick to your absurd identification, but I'll make you a small wager that it won't be fought out on the floor of the Exchange nor reported by the ticker."

"I don't get you!" protested Loftbury, but again his face flushed and Regan's smile broadened as he glanced at his watch.

"We must be getting on pretty soon, or we'll miss Trixie Tricastle's act—if that still matters to you," he said, and Loftbury did not press for further explanation.

TO BE CONTINUED.



CANADA SHOWS THE WAY

ONCE more Canada has acted in progressive legislation while American lawmakers have only talked. In government loans to builders of homes, in official aid, in the form of a town-planning commission, for those who are locating new communities in the vast, unsettled regions of the Northwest, and in other ways the Dominion has shown us the way. The latest achievement is the actual establishment of a colony of returned soldiers on lands allotted them in recognition of their services in the World War.

The Kapuskasing Colony, founded by the provincial government of Ontario on the timbered crown lands of the Clay Belt, has been in legal existence for two years, and in actual working order for more than a year. More than sixty-five families are now settled on the land, which is halfway between Lake Huron and Hudson Bay, on the Kapuskasing River. A train of the National Transcontinental Railway stops each day at the central village, where nineteen neat frame houses in a row, a planing mill, a blacksmith shop, a warehouse, an "administration building," and a handsome little schoolhouse, with a big water tank high over all, make a very respectable showing. The surrounding territory is covered by a forest of pointed firs. In the summer, the climate is like that of Maine, and in the winter the air is so crisp and dry that at twenty below one "feels like a king."

Each returned soldier who wishes to live there may receive free title to a plot of one hundred acres, of which ten are cleared at government expense, with the understanding that ten more shall be cleared in five years by the settler. Also, a house is built free of charge on each lot. In spite of politics and other drawbacks which the settlers had to contend with in their dealings with the government, the colony is flourishing. As a former cockney, now the landholding head of a family of six, expresses it: "They 'ad three men to a buzz saw. One was a loafer, and another a talkin' fish, and they 'eld up the work of the only man who knew 'ow to run the saw," but real progress was made, and in nine months after the first settlers began life there in tents, thirty-two families were installed in comfortable houses.

An accurate soil survey is still needed to help the colonists get the best results, and the town-planning commission should aid in choosing a permanent site for a city, and to locate future settlers in better proximity to each other. At present, the colony is sprawled for eight miles along the railway. There are few social diversions yet. "Unless we can get together for dances and such, we might as well be dead," says the wife of one of the settlers. But a beginning has been made in what promises to be a great forward step in civilization on the North American continent.

A DOCTOR OF THE WILDS

AT last Doctor Grenfell, who might almost be called the patron saint of Labrador, has written the story of his life. It is an inspiring narrative that he gives the world. His work has been unique, perhaps without a parallel in the chronicles of time.

Born near Chester, England, the son of a clergyman, he, nevertheless, had a rough-and-tumble boyhood, out of doors most of the time, a natural hunter. Many of his ancestors were soldiers and adventurers.

From youth he evinced an inclination toward medicine. Training in London Hospital, in Whitechapel, he came into contact with the neediest and most miserable human beings, and his heart was enlisted for the poor. But instead of remaining among the city sufferers, upon receiving his diploma he was persuaded to give his services to the fishermen of the North Sea. These men and boys—there were over twenty thousand of them—were a revelation to him, "the merriest, cheerfulest lot I had ever met," he says. Doubtless, he, too, was a revelation to them with his healing for body and soul and his unfailing hand.

In 1891 he was asked by a member of the Mission Board if he would not go to Newfoundland and see what could be done for the fishermen of the Northwest Atlantic. Doctor Grenfell found the conditions terrible. At once he entered on missionary-medical work that was to become the passion of his life. Indifferent to all personal dangers and deprivations, he labored among the people, who had no idea of hygiene and were full of medieval superstitions. Tuberculosis was prevalent among the Eskimos, and eye troubles were universal among the native fisherfolk. In fact, the whole people of north Newfoundland and Labrador were in a state of pitiable neglect. Doctor Grenfell touches on his insuperable difficulties in that bleak region. Here is one glimpse:

"We reached a house at midnight, found a boy with a broken thigh, and had to begin work by thawing out a frozen board to plane it for splints. . . . On another occasion we had to knock down a partition in a tiny cottage, make a full-length wooden bath, pitching the seams to make it watertight, in order to treat a severe cellulitis. Now it would be a maternity case, now a dental one, now a gunshot wound or an ax-cut with severed tendons to adjust, now pneumonia, when often in solitary and unlearned homes we would ourselves do the nursing and especially the cooking."

But curing the sick and alleviating pain was merely one side of his job. He cared for these forgotten people in other ways. Making trips to civilized centers, he lectured and pleaded in behalf of his charges, in this fashion raising money for their betterment. Due to him the fishermen and trappers were protected from exploiters of their products. He introduced manufactures into north Newfoundland. Through his influence schools, hospitals, and libraries were made possible, and he founded asylums and homes for orphan children.

Many were his hazardous experiences, near death a score of times. One adventure in particular belongs to us as POPULAR habitués. Doctor Grenfell found himself afloat at sea on a cake of ice, with only his dogs and sled to fall back on. He killed three of the dogs, wrapped himself in their skins, and used their frozen legs for a flagpole, to which he fastened his shirt as a signal of distress. After two days and a night he was rescued.

Doctor Grenfell is a real hero, and what is rarer and greater, a real humanitarian. His book ought to be read by everybody.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF TIPS

THE antitipping movement has received a jolt by the decision of the highest court in Iowa that the statute enacted against the practice in 1915 is unconstitutional. The law is condemned as class legislation because a "law which forbids employees to receive tips but does not prohibit employers from doing likewise, denies to the former equal protection of law."

The statute was often violated openly, and secretly it was circumvented many thousands of times. Pullman porters never stopped to learn whether they were in Iowa, or had crossed the border into an adjoining State, before accepting a piece of change from a passenger, and hotel and restaurant guests who wanted to make sure of good service generally managed to leave a coin under a plate or a napkin if they expected to patronize the same dining room again. The test case was brought to end the travesty.

Tipping is as old as civilization, and will probably continue in some form as long as civilization exists. The best method seems to be to regulate and systematize the practice rather than to try to put an end to it. In the United States there is no standard of service or of reward for servitors in public establishments. The public is bullied by the waiter class, who, in the larger cities, are largely foreigners, and who have been so generously treated by our newly rich that they have become spoiled for service to persons of ordinary means. It is not so abroad, as witness the case of an English waiter who was given too large a tip by a rich American in London. He handed back the difference between ten per cent of the cost of the meal and the amount really given him as a gratuity, saying: "Sir, I am entitled to but ten per cent; and that is all I will accept." With him, waiting was a dignified profession.

The philosophy of tipping seems to be that there will always be human beings who want better than the ordinary service, and likewise there will always be human beings as servitors who will find no incentive in giving extraordinary service without the hope of a substantial recognition therefore as soon as their work is ended. Take away the incentive, and there will be only mechanical, cold-blooded, or slipshod attentions to a guest, in hotel or restaurant or Turkish bathhouse or on board steamers. Do you suppose the deck steward, for instance, would care how quickly he brought a shivering passenger a rug to keep off the gales on a transoceanic steamer if he did not look forward to getting about five dollars at the end of the voyage, and did not know he would get nothing if he was not attentive?

SPEECHMAKING

LAMENTS over the decline, not only of oratory, but of the art of mere speechmaking as well, are heard in both America and England. There does not seem to be any outstanding orator in the world to-day except the many-sided D'Annunzio, whose fervid speeches have stirred all Italy and a large part of the world besides. Lloyd George is forceful, direct, convincing; President Wilson is scholarly, precise, and masterful in the use of the spoken as of the written word, but neither has the fervor nor the inspiring eloquence of the true orator. There are several senators, notably Reed of Missouri, who are fine speakers, but none is ranked as a great orator.

It is twenty-three years since Bryan swept a national convention off its feet with his famous "cross-of-gold" speech, and Bryan is still orating, but he does not stampede any meetings nowadays. Recently, after hearing him speak, one of his former admirers turned to a companion and said: "Well, Bryan ain't the man he used to be," and the other replied, "No, and he never was."

It may be because of the material age in which we live that there are so few orations. There are plenty of great events, and never was public speaking so widely practiced—at banquets, luncheons, indoor and outdoor meetings, and in legislative halls, and at all these by women as well as by men. "Schools of oratory" flourish, and books on "How to Become a Public Speaker" are advertised on every hand, and yet the standard of the speeches heard is deplorably low. Perhaps the speakers should heed the advice of Mr. Dooley:

"No, sir. When a man has something to say an' don't know how to say it, he says it pretty well. When he has something to say an' knows how to say it, he makes a gr-reat speech. But when he has nawthin' to say and has a lot of wur-ruds that come with a black coat, he's an orator."

Mark Twain once quoted approvingly a sea captain who spoke thus wisely and well, and to the point: "Gentlemen, this is the glorious Fourth. Waiter, bring up another basket of champagne."

Trying to compress into a sentence his advice on how to become a good speaker, an English critic of public men wrote: "To attain this object, you should first succeed in life, and have your portrait, or that of a confusing namesake, inserted in a good paper; then be provided with a cheerful, handsome face, a large and imposing frame, the voice of a Rosebery or a Coleridge, the wit of a Chesterton, the memory of an actor, and the humor of Mr. Dooley. Nothing more is required, except to breathe through the nostrils and to wait for appropriate words."

FOR A NATIONAL HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSE

TENS of thousands of automobile campers are criss-crossing the States, fishing, shooting, and seeing the country. They kill hawks and let them lie beside the road; they shoot rabbits, grouse, squirrels, and other small game, with occasional forays into the big timber and wide wild places, killing deer, elk, and similar game.

"Don't get caught at it," is the word passed along the line of the automobile tourists, seeking game and fish, contrary to the hunting and fishing laws. Most automobiles carry firearms and fishing tackle.

Commonly, it takes an automobile from two to ten days to cross a State at the normal eighty to one hundred miles a day run. State licenses cost for hunting small game from ten dollars to twenty-five dollars and from fifteen to fifty dollars for hunting big game. The average tourist would not shoot more than two or three head of small game in a State, and payment of ten dollars or more for this privilege is too much—and, consequently, there are tens of thousands of game-law violators rolling around, shooting the public's game, regardless of season and never-popular hunting licenses. More are fishing contrary to State fishing license requirements.

Wherever tourist hunters and fishermen congregate, there is a demand for a hunting and fishing license good anywhere and everywhere, to be obtained from known authorities. A national hunting and fishing license for game and fish that are protected in national forests, reserves, public waters, and on national lands would be within the constitution. State legislatures could give them sanction, and the privileges would be universal, and give control and check to the increasing shooting-lawlessness of the automobile tourists. Such a license would solve one of the problems of the automobile tourist, just as the State automobile license solves the problem of universal travel.

BUSINESS AND THE BOY

ASK any youngster that you happen to meet what he is going to be when he grows up and the reply is usually prompt. He wants to be a fireman or a policeman or a soldier or a car conductor. It is simple. But with the advent of "long pants" he is not so sure of his business bent. Neither is any one else.

One of the most critical moments of life is the decision as to a career. Most of us are indeterminate. Only a fortunate few are those who feel a compelling inclination or instinct for some particular vocation. The majority of us blow hot and cold on one thing or another until finally circumstance or acquaintance helps us out.

Oddly enough older men, when sought out by a young fellow to give him advice on the subject, as a rule are only certain about one thing, and that is not to follow his, the advisor's, example as to occupation. Thus the bookkeeper will deprecate his field of action and probably recommend that of a lawyer, the lawyer will follow the bookkeeper's method and, perhaps, call attention to the chances in medicine, the doctor consulted on this will throw up his hands and doubtless counsel the boy to stick to commercial life, then the banker, called upon, will shake his head and declare that the farmer's life is the ideal one to pursue.

And so it goes.

The boy had better search his own heart diligently and keep alert for the mystic call which comes from no-whither. Meanwhile let him study hard at school and college,

keep his body fit, mingle with his fellows on a footing of equality, and learn to work with both his hands and his head.

By pursuing this course he may not become a fireman or a policeman or a soldier or a car conductor, but he may become something quite as useful.

PROHIBITIONS

FOREVER the pendulum of public opinion swings from one extreme to the other, never stopping in the middle of its arc. And it is well it does not stop, for the clock of social customs must be kept going, come what may, from the sunrise hour of innocent dawn to the midnight hour of evil dark.

Thus public opinion wags in favor of dancing until it outrages decency, and then it wags the other way. It swings indulgently for strong drink until alcohol becomes a menace to the body of society, and then it violently plunges in the opposite direction toward total abstinence. It describes a smiling curve for tobacco consumption until the health of youth is threatened, and then it begins to vibrate contrarily.

All of us have witnessed these contradictory phases in our social scheme during the past generation.

Some one has said that the world was a man, is becoming a woman, and will be a child. Perhaps in its course of feminization, then, it will be influenced and swayed toward numerous prohibitions for the protection of its human members, for woman is the natural conserver of health and morals.

In this connection it may be pertinent to observe that almost coincident with the objectionable public dancing, in which women were active partners, and the swift adoption of smoking and drinking by women, came the reaction, the tendency to forbid these things.

And the majority of the new reforms that loom upon the horizon now are concerned mainly with the habits and practices of women. There is the anticosmetic league, the anticorset league, the antikissing league, the antichewing-gum league, and the antifeathers league.

The comforting thought that the endlessly swinging pendulum brings us is that the extremes of its arc are in reality but small points in its course, and that in between there is the widest latitude of moderation.

POPULAR TOPICS

ONE of the things to be most ardently hoped for this new year is a deflation of our ideas. It is bad enough to have an inflated currency, but to have inflated ideas is far worse. In this country we are suffering from this malady. Paul M. Warburg put it well when he said:

> The world lives in a fool's paradise based upon fictitious wealth, rash promises, and mad illusions. The disease is world-wide. . . . There are two fundamental evils common to all which must be eradicated if world bankruptcy and communism are to be avoided. These are the continuous "increase of prices" and the "decrease of production." . . . Prolonged disregard of sound economic principles will wreck business enterprises as well as governments.

To overcome the unfavorable exchange situation, Germany has cleverly adopted the experiment of manufacturing "on shares." By this means she exchanges labor for raw materials, thus escaping the disadvantage of her depreciated currency. For instance, hides brought into the country for tanning are paid for in leather, or if shoes are made of it, then shoes are taken in payment. Such transactions require no exchange of money. The Germans call it "exporting our blood."

IS sugar eating to take the place of alcohol consumption? Many observers think so. Estimates on candy for the coming year of 1920 are placed at one billion dollars. It is well known that great quantities of sweets are consumed by nations which abstain from alcohol. Turks are forbidden strong drink by the Koran, but they absorb vast amounts of sugar. Mr. Hoover states that at present we consume ninety-three pounds of sugar per capita annually, the largest record ever in our history. "Six million three thousand pounds of sugar are consumed daily by the Americans for confectionaries—candy and sweet drinks," said Hoover.

TEXTILE manufacturers are faced by a serious problem as a result of a third successive short crop of cotton. The world production of cotton has been on the decline since 1914-15. In 1915 world production reached over 20,000,000 bales; in 1916 it fell to less than 19,000,000 bales; in 1917 it fell to about 17,000,000 bales; on July 31, 1919, at the end of the crop year, production had fallen under 16,000,000 bales. Meanwhile, to complicate the matter, the spindles of the world have increased, since 1915 having multiplied some 3,000,000.

PIANO manufacturers in Great Britain are worrying over their markets. During the war their materials and energies went into the making of airplanes. Now they find their rivals strong competitors. The American instrument has found high favor in South Africa and Australia, while it is rumored that Germany has forty-three thousand pianos ready for export at a lower figure than British manufacturers can meet.

IT is heartening to contemplate that while we foozle around our railroad tangle, and see no way out of it, we can keep on building roads for other lands not vexed with such difficulties. There is tremendous stimulation in the building of railroads in various parts of the world. Latin America has many ambitious projects, and in both the Near East and Far East there have been evolved similar plans. There is a comprehensive program for the construction of railroads in Africa which it is estimated will take fifteen years to complete and cost approximately eight hundred million dollars. Even India is getting busy with railways.

WHILE we talk about the salary increases here, there, and everywhere, let us not fail to take note of a place where salaries remain modest and stationary. It is the little republic of Andorra. Its president receives sixteen dollars a year and the twenty-four members of its Parliament each receives three dollars a year. Andorra is the oldest and smallest republic on earth. The population numbers about six thousand. Bolshevism, profiteering, strikes, murders, drunkenness, and politics are unknown there.

PERFUMES are getting to be an absolute necessity with our middle-class workingmen and women, according to authentic report, and the demand grows for variety. The cosmetic chemist is constantly on the hunt for new odors. Real flower fragrance has been exhausted, and synthetic scents and combinations are in vogue. Incidentally, it might amaze the majority of perfume addicts to know from whence come many of their favorite scents. Garbage is one rich source.

LET us wish you a happy Chinese New Year. What is that? Well, you must eat two kinds of cakes, yellow and white, representing plenty of gold and silver to you in the next twelvemonth. Then we say to you: "May you be blessed with a big fat son, unspeakable riches, strong, good health, and good luck in whatever you do and wherever you go."

The Blue Streak

By William B. Compton

Flying around the world is the next great feat for the human birds. It is scheduled to happen this year. Meanwhile the writer of this imaginative globe-circling airplane journey gives us a vivid experience of the stunt.

NOON, October 1, 1925.—I feel as buoyant as an albatross, with white wings spread, swimming the gale, as I glide over ethereal currents five hundred feet above the swell of the sunlit Pacific two hundred and forty miles west of San Francisco, going two miles a minute with a light breeze on the port side. I left San Francisco at ten o'clock this morning in my race for the one hundred thousand dollars offered by the United States government for the first to streak it around the globe before October 31st. There was a big crowd to see me off and lots of cheering, but Lucile was not there.

My motor is cool and working fine. The bearings show not the slightest degree of heat, thanks to the new babbitt metal I am using, and to my lubricant. The new patent windbreak is a success, as I find myself able to breathe easily. It will work at any speed.

I wonder how Bradley, of Los Angeles, and Masten, of Seattle, are faring, and Dean, Walsh, and Wood flying east from New York? They are all good men, but my craft, the *Blue Streak,* will win. I am confident of success through the perfection of my engines, which are a new departure in high-speed motor construction, and have developed two hundred horse power, weigh twenty-five pounds, use one drop of oleumocine a minute, and are absolutely reliable. They never miss fire. They are not yet secured by patents, but their mechanism is most simple, being devoid of the intricacies of nonreciprocating rotary engines. As for oleumocine, it is a discovery of mine that has five hundred times the efficiency of gasoline, and its explosions are cooler by fifty per cent.

Will now have some cold roast beef and a cup of coffee heated electrically from my surplus power. I have a tank of coffee that will last for several days.

3 p. m.—About six hundred miles out, steering two points north of west, in order to allow for leeway. There is a stiff wind on the port side. The weather has been fine all the way, the barometer being steady at thirty up to two-forty-five p. m, since which time it has fallen a couple of points, indicating a tendency to a change. I would not like to run into a storm so will rise to an elevation of two thousand five hundred feet in order to see around.

6 p. m.—About nine hundred and sixty miles out. Barometer still the same. Guess the change was due to difference in longitude. Saw two steamers at different times. They looked like toys. Couldn't get them by wireless phone. Might have got my longitude if I had. The operators must have been sleep, or perhaps they have no apparatus. It ought to be a law that all ships have wireless phones. Am going to have something to eat and prepare for the night. It's rather lonesome up here over this vast stretch of water encircled by the horizon, no towns to look down on, not even a ship, or a school of whales. I am beginning to feel tired. My legs are cramped. Wish I could find an uncharted island where I could get off and stretch them, like the "N" boys did at the Azores in 1919. What a pipe that was compared to the Pacific! Think I'll take a daylight nap, as I want to be awake as much as possible at night. All I have to do is to set my engine at the desired speed along my chosen course at a safe altitude and, as the balancing power of my plane is perfect, I can lie back and take my rest. Should the engine slow down, which is not at all likely, or the plane swerve from its course, the change of sensation will, I trust, wake me, but this failing, the annunciator, which is set in operation by the slightest change of speed, direction, or angle, will certainly arouse me.

9 p. m.—One thousand three hundred and twenty miles out. Slept half an hour. Al-

most missed the sunset. The sun goes down late this far west on the ocean and at this altitude. It looked like a big red balloon seeming to swell larger and larger, and then to burst and become diffused in the mists, leaving a wonderful glow in the sky, and the twilight at this altitude lasted for hours. Then the stars came out, pale at first but silently blinking brighter and brighter and an unutterable loneliness came over me. Have slowed down to a mile a minute. Glad the moon is out. I am sailing over a silvery sea. It's good to see the moon up there not any farther off than usual, but in an empty environment like the primal beginning of things where land and trees will be smudged in afterward, and I, the only living thing, a mote floating in silent space. Think I'll take off the mufflers, just to have some noise and feel as big as a mosquito. I have been admiring the lady in the moon. She has a perfect profile. A wisp of cloud drifted across her face, and for a moment it looked as though her hair was streaming in the wind. The clouds have been gathering more densely. I do not like it. The barometer has fallen another point. The moon has become obliterated. I am writing in the flash of my pocket lamp. My electric lamp and searchlight are out of order. The darkness is something unthinkable. I am suspended in it! Immersed in it! Impenetrable blackness below, above, before me, against me, I can feel it. I am experiencing an unutterable feeling of terror, a nervousness that I cannot fling off. Three thousand feet of inscrutable depths below, and the ocean. Am I three thousand feet in the air! Certainly! The plane is perfectly balanced as the spirit levels show. My engine is absolutely reliable. Why should I be afraid! I am alone in space without a resting place, in the awful solitude of darkness on the ocean. If I could hear the sound of a voice! The wireless! I'll try the wireless.

October 2d, 6 a. m.—Two thousand two hundred and sixty miles west of San Francisco. Last night is but a memory, a memory that will always be with me. In my awful fear I cried into the wireless.

"Hello!" came back out of space.

"Who are you?" I shouted.

"Bradley, of Los Angeles," came the answer.

"Bradley, the aviator?" I screamed.

"Yes! How did you know and who are you?"

"Liston, of San Francisco."

"The hell you are!"

"Where are you, Bradley?"

"Don't know. Somewhere in the dark. A flock of wild geese put my lights out of commission. I've been frightened to death all alone in the sky; glad you spoke. It's been a hell of a struggle against the impulse to jump. All right now though, since I heard you."

"Same here. It seems as though we are in the same room, and the light out, doesn't it?"

"Yes, it does! Pretty large room though. Where are you?"

"At my last reckoning at nine o'clock going two miles a minute, I figured myself to be two thousand two hundred and sixty miles west of San Francisco."

"That beats me. I've been making on an average of sixty miles an hour. You must be seven hundred and ten miles farthest west than I and about eight hundred miles away as the crow flies."

"That's about the way I figure it. I like you, Bradley, though I have never seen you. I wish we could be together. You are Lucile's friend."

To this I received no answer.

"Hello!" I cried anxiously. "Anything wrong?"

"I thought I smelled gasoline," he answered, "now I know it. I can hear it dripping. Those birds came head on and may have caused some damage. I can't tell anything about it in the dark."

"Can I help you?"

"You've got a race to win, old man. Don't lose your lead."

"I'm anxious about you."

"Don't worry. Everything's running smoothly."

He asked about Lucile.

"Is her hair just as black and are her eyes just as brown?"

"I don't know, Bradley," I laughed. "They are just as black and brown as hair and eyes can be."

"I remember," he said, "that she had a beauty spot, a little brown mole just above the corner of her lip on the right side."

"Still there," I said.

"Does she still grow white around the nostrils while the blushes flame in her cheeks and her eyes shine like wet crystals?"

"She does, indeed, when excited. You've got her down pat, old man."

"Yes! that's the way she looked the last time I saw her, tall, graceful, beautiful as Diana, and as implacable."

"Same with me. She looked like that when last I saw her."

"Was there a quarrel?"

"Um-m. She didn't want me to fly in this race, and I am flying——"

There was a long silence.

"Anything wrong?" I asked anxiously.

"Just listening to the motor. It missed fire once or twice."

"I'm going to meet you by morning," I said. "I'll fly south one hundred and fifty miles. I can make it in a little over an hour. Then I'll make westing at minimum speed and in the morning you'll overtake me."

With the flash light I read the compass. I was heading due west and turned south at right angles to my course. For more than an hour we talked until I believed I was in his track and told him I would loaf along waiting for him to overtake me.

"No use, old man. Missing fire right along now. The gasoline is giving out."

"I'm flying to meet you at two hundred and ten miles an hour. Keep up your courage," I cried, turning the *Blue Streak* to the east.

"You can't find me in the dark, besides it will be all over in half an hour if I don't end it sooner!"

"I can help you!" I cried. "Wait for me!"

"I can't stand the suspense!" he answered.

"Wait for me!" I shouted. My terror was as great as though the peril were my own.

He did not answer.

"Bradley! Bradley!" I called.

"Well!" came his voice out of the darkness.

"How are you flying?"

"I expect to volplane any moment. Engine running slower and slower. I am going to jump. I can't help it."

"Bradley! Bradley!" I shouted.

Crazy laughter and song came back. Bradley had gone mad.

I called again, but no answer came, and I knew that Bradley had volplaned into the sea.

Swinging around in a great curve I headed into the west. How I kept my mind through the night I do not know. There must have been minutes when I slept. At last daylight came, but with a pall of clouds that made it no better than twilight. After a cup of hot coffee and something to eat I inspected my electrical connections. The bulb had jarred loose by the vibration. All that was necessary was to screw it up. The connections of my searchlight had been overlooked when I left San Francisco. The plane is in perfect condition and so is the engine. I don't know where I am, having lost my reckoning trying to help poor Bradley. On account of not being able to get the sun I cannot take an observation for longitude, but am probably west one hundred miles less than at the head of this entry on account of my southing and easting when I should have been making westing at the rate of sixty miles an hour, my running time at night. I am very tired and am going to take a nap. Speed is increased to two hundred miles an hour. My legs are all cramped up. Wish I could find an island. The chart, however, does not show any islands on this latitude, which I think is 30° north. The wind is brisker, sky overcast, and barometer is showing danger signals. The situation is alarming but I don't care. I am going to sleep. The plane can run itself. The drowsiness that is creeping upon me is due to natural fatigue. I have never heard of ethereal asphyxia over the ocean, though I have gone through pockets of that strange sleep-inducing essence of the air in my overland flights. Slept for an hour. Awakened by the annunciator. Heavy wind from the north.

October 3d, 6 a. m.—Off the coast of some Asiatic country which I can see like a smudge on the water. Will be over it in half an hour. Think it is the Chinese Republic. At this time yesterday I had flown two thousand two hundred and sixty miles or about a quarter of the way over the eight-thousand-mile breadth of the Pacific. An hour later a storm caught me napping. I was awakened by the annunciator which had been set in operation by the lurching of the aëroplane due to a gale from the northeast. From the action of the barometer and changing of the wind I believed that I was in one of the circular storms of which I had read and knew that its center was somewhere to the southwest. The *Blue Streak* could never have gone against that gale and held together, my only chance was to speed along the wind and beat the storm center across its track. I threw on the high-

speed clutch and watched the barometer. During the first minute it fell gradually. The second, I thought the bottom had dropped out and that the storm was about to swallow me.

At the end of the second minute the barometer began to rise and the wind changed its direction, showing that I was on another part of the circumference of the storm circle, and had beaten the center across the track along which it was traveling. My speed must have been four miles a minute, and in those two minutes I traveled eight miles, for I went faster than the wind.

Then the air began to pour into the vacuum and I was drawn after it. For twenty-four hours I have been in its grip traveling westward. Though it has helped me six thousand miles on my way, I would like to shake it and get down on the ground for a real rest.

3 p. m.—Have just awakened from an exhausted sleep. Incredible though it may seem, I have slept since seven o'clock this morning. My speed still is about the same, three miles a minute. At this rate I must be sixteen hundred and twenty miles from the coast, or six thousand three hundred and eighty miles west of San Francisco. Sixty-three hundred and eighty miles in three days is something unthinkable. Though my actual time has been three days, as I am flying from the rising sun, I have lost a day somewhere in the Pacific. That is to say, there is a day registered that I don't get. The calendar would show it to be October 4th in China. If I were flying toward the sun I would gain a day. Night is coming on. I have a big leeway, this is a safe, steady wind, and me for some sleep.

October 4th, 6 a. m.—Have stopped figuring distance. Wind unabated. Must be almost across this country which I know now to be the Chinese Republic. At three o'clock this morning, through a rift in the clouds, to the northward, I made out the star Polaris through the aid of the Big Dipper. I had to work fast in order to get its altitude before the rift closed.

Setting up my especially constructed artificial horizon, and, taking my sextant from its case, I adjusted the telescopes, soon bringing the star down to its image in the mercury, and clamped the vernier just as the star and its image disappeared through the closing of the rift. The latitude observed read 60° 55′ on the vernier, and a mental division by two gave me 31° 27½′ as the latitude of the star above the horizon, which, of course, for my purpose, is practically my latitude. I am, therefore, crossing the Chinese Republic in latitude about 31½° north.

Stretched across my course from the southeast to the northwest is a dark menacing line that keeps rising higher and higher above the horizon. Guess I'll consult the chart. Just as I thought. The Himalayan range of mountains. They are now towering above me. Don't think I can rise more than ten thousand feet. Am now at six thousand five hundred, and these mountains are the highest in the world; twenty thousand to thirty thousand feet. I dare not turn in this wind, or reverse my screws. Like any mariner, I may be wrecked on a lee shore. My only hope is to find a low place over which to pass.

9 a. m.—Think I must be in India. Will look it up later. When the mountains were frowning above me I thought that the end was near, but to my astonishment the *Blue Streak* answered her helm and darted off on a line parallel to the mountains at a more retarded speed. It soon became apparent that the storm had been stopped by the mountains and was dispersing along its sides. I followed the air current into a pocket between lofty cliffs and on the theory that a column of air was rising and being forced over the summit, I began to spiral and to my great joy attained an altitude where the air was spilling over the ridge. I made the summit and landed on a plateau several thousand feet below. The most difficult part of my journey I consider to be over. Now for a good walk around that will take the stiffness out of my limbs.

After an exhilarating walk—it is extremely cold up here—I took off my bear-skin coat and paper gloves and overhauled the machine. There was not much to be done other than to tighten two or three stanchions and a couple of laterals, and she was as taut as when I took her out of my shop in San Francisco. My new wind break that enables me to breathe comfortably at any speed, had not suffered in the least. It seemed hardly necessary to change the babbitt bearings, but I decided not to take any chances. I was glad to have breakfast on the ground. The bacon and eggs and piping hot coffee went well. Will now consult my

charts. My longitude can easily be obtained from the map. Approximately it's the same as the range of mountains in which I find myself. My latitude last night was 31½° north. I will assume that I am still on that latitude. I can't be far off, and, having crossed the Himalayan Mountains, I must be in the northern part of India, possibly in Nepal. Bombay then lies to the southwest on the Arabian Sea. I shall, therefore, fly south by west until I strike the big sheet of water which will be the Arabian Sea, and hunt up or down the coast for Bombay. Then—let's have a look at the map of the world. Ah, ha! Looks like plain sailing from Bombay. I'm not going to hit it right across as the crow flies, as was my first intention. By following the waterways or seas I'll know my location pretty well. I'll fly from Bombay across the Arabian Sea and across southern Arabia until I come to the Red Sea, which I'll follow to the Mediterranean, stopping at Port Said. Then I'll follow the Mediterranean to southern Spain. How small Spain looks. I'll get across in a couple of hours into France, across the Bay of Biscay, stopping at Brest. Then the English Channel and, well, that will be about all for the present. I want to get out of these mountains.

October 4th, 11 a. m.—In the air headed southwest with Bombay approximately one thousand miles away.

12 m.—Have passed over some remarkable country. In the foothills my nostrils were assailed by the perfume of magnolia forests. I was glad to get out of that atmosphere and look down on the changing flora that seemed a mass of vivid color, the oleander and its variety predominating. This, the northern part of India, bordering on Tibet, is no doubt the wildest, being farthest from commercial centers. No lands under cultivation. Am going to slide down to altitude of five hundred feet.

2 p. m.—This is a wonderfully diversified country. I have been flying alternately over jungles and grassy plains and marshy land. Have seen some most interesting sights. Think I will write them up in detail when I get back. In passing over the plains I saw numerous herds of antelope, and it wasn't long before I came to a water hole—I think that is what they call a place where wild animals drink. I slowed down because I wanted to see as much as possible. Some wild hogs were wallowing among the reeds, and there were about twenty antelope, some with muzzles up sniffing the wind and looking alertly around, while others were drinking or crowding down to the water's edge. Suddenly there was a streak of yellow from the high reeds, a scattering of the herd, leaving one behind, and it under the paw of a Royal Bengal tiger. He was a magnificent beast, head up and tail lashing from side to side. Never had he been touched by man and always had he killed his own food. I'd like to have his yellow skin with its black stripes. He sank his teeth into the throat of the antelope and dragged it into the bush.

I wouldn't like to come down in any part of this country. The jungle and plains are alive with things that would get me if I did. In one place I heard a crashing of branches and saw a herd of elephants feeding on the young leaves and twigs of trees. Their trunks looked like big snakes curling around the branches that they pulled down. They saw me as I came near and went crashing into the jungle. Have passed over some cultivated areas without seeing any people or their habitations. The banyan trees are marvelous. I find the vegetation so rich that there is a miasma in the air which may induce malaria, so am going up to a rarefied atmosphere. Hope I don't strike any sleeping drafts up there.

4 p. m.—At three o'clock I sighted a little town on a railroad track. Circled around and got it on the wireless phone. It was the town of Currah in the northern part of the Central Provinces, India. Henry Giles, the agent and operator, implored me to come down but this I would not do, as I feared delay in getting away, the population being in a state of excitement. Giles then asked me to send him a photograph of myself, which I promised to do. He telegraphed my arrival on to Bombay. Every way station along the line got the news and was on the lookout for me as I passed, hailing me on the phone and keeping me apprised of my distance from Bombay.

6 p. m.—On account of a detour of the railroad in skirting a low range of mountains, to follow which would have added an hour to my time, I decided to fly straight for the coast, thinking to pick up the track again in the vicinity of my destination. In this, however, I failed, and as a consequence am flying south along the coast, not

being sure of the direction I should take. Am looking for some small town, of which there are many along the coast, from which I can get my bearings.

Bombay. Twelve midnight by my watch and chronometer. I will now set my watch fifty-two minutes ahead, there being twelve hours and fifty-two minutes difference in time. Before retiring will write an account of my reception in Bombay. At six-thirty p. m. I flew over the town of Thanan on the coast and spoke to it on the wireless. Bombay, I found, was a hundred miles to the south and was expecting me. Considerable anxiety had been felt after my disappearance in the mountains. Special trains, I was informed, were being run from near-by cities, with passengers anxious to witness my arrival. At seven-thirty p. m. I saw a city that was conspicuous for its beautiful marble railway terminal. A square away was an illuminated park where the committee had arranged for me to alight. I came down in front of the statue of Queen Victoria, where I was met by a committee and made the guest of the city.

I am an honorary member of the Army-Navy Aëro Club, where I will sleep to-night. It was a delight to plunge into the tank and an ecstasy in the barber's chair. I have been banqueted and made friends with officers of the presidency, the municipality, and the army and navy, and have been lionized by the ladies, all of whom have my autograph. Have met a little English girl. She is lovely, and I have her photograph. Promised her mine, and am to drop her a postal from every city I stop at. Her name is Vera Thornleigh.

This has been a strenuous five hours. I have seen a Nautch girl do the egg dance. Snake charmers and conjurers have performed for me. In fact, I have done the town in much the same way that tourists do San Francisco.

As I sat at the banquet table I was informed that my arrival in Bombay had been flashed to all the great cities of the world, and that without a doubt crowds were standing in front of the bulletin boards of the newspapers in San Francisco, reading the news of my adventures, that being the first that had been heard of me since leaving the Pacific coast.

I took the occasion to inquire after the other contestants.

Masten met with an accident and landed on a steamer en route for Shanghai. He said that if he ever attempted to fly again, it would be in a balloon.

The three flying from New York left together and the last seen of them was three hair lines on the sky. Steamers, however, had spoken them, and said that they had separated, Wood being in the lead. Later dispatches said that Dean had blown into Halifax and had given up the race. Walsh landed on a Cunard steamer bound for Liverpool, saying he preferred that kind of ocean travel. Nothing further had been heard from Wood and nothing at all from Bradley of Los Angeles. I then told them the story of poor Bradley. Well, me for the hay. I must be in the air to-morrow at ten o'clock.

Bombay, October 5th, 8 a. m.—In a couple of hours I leave this city, which is on an island of the same name, and fly straight across the Arabian Sea, and the southern part of Arabia to the Red Sea, a distance of three thousand seven hundred miles. I will be off the coast of Arabia, which is about half the distance, probably at nine-thirty p. m., if I keep my speed at two hundred miles an hour. In the morning I should be on the west coast of Arabia. My friends in Bombay are sorry that I cannot stay another day, but realizing that I am in a race and have a record to make, have refrained from urging a delay in my departure.

I shall always remember my advent into this city. I had been in the air for four days, most of the time under terrifying conditions. I had not seen a human being, except in a microscopic way, in all that time, so it was good to get down on the ground and feel my fellow men crowding about me.

The *Blue Streak* and her engines have been thoroughly inspected. I have filled the water tanks, put fresh coffee in the coffee tank, gauged my oleumocine, and am ready for a long flight. The plane has been placed in front of the beautiful marble structure called the Apollo Bunder, where I cashed a draft against my letter of credit. I think I will beat that draft back to San Francisco. I was foreign enchange clerk in a bank once and used to take an interest in the drafts that came back from all parts of the world. A traveler can be traced by his drafts. This will be the first time that a man ever beat a draft back, this distance from home.

A great crowd has gathered to see me off. I have dated this entry the fifth, but this is San Francisco time. In Bombay it is the sixth, so my next entry which will be made a couple of hours later—in order to account for the lost day—will be dated the sixth. My latitude is 18° 53′ 54″ north and my longitude is 72° 52′ east, and I didn't take an observation to get it. This is the first time since leaving San Francisco, that I have been absolutely sure of my location, but think I did marvelously well to reckon myself into northern India, decide on Bombay, and make it as I did. Under my present sailing plans, I feel that I will know my locality for the rest of the trip.

October 6th, 11 a. m.—In the air an hour and most of that time have been thinking of those I have just left behind and of the wild shout they gave when I soared to a height of a thousand feet, circled three times around the square and darted away to the west so fast that the local planes could not keep up with me. Vera Thornleigh was there. She looked like she had been crying about something. Gave me a sweet smile, though. Have seen quite a number of ships. Thermometer going up. Now at 78°. Beginning to feel the heat.

12 m.—Four hundred miles out. Had something to eat.

4 p. m.—Twelve hundred miles out. Haven't seen land since eleven a. m. Nothing in sight, not even a whale. Don't like flying over a big stretch of water. Glad I haven't got to cross the Pacific again. It gets monotonous when you can't see anything but water.

6 p. m.—Sixteen hundred miles out. Am chasing the low sun. Hope I can chase it into the desert of Arabia. Think I'll dine.

7 p. m.—Sun hanging low over the desert, which looks like a streak of fire across the sea, about fifty miles distant. In a quarter of an hour I will have left the water.

7:15.—The sun has just gone down slowly, slipping like a great blood-red disk into a slit in the lurid desert. If I were only a writer, or a painter!

The twilight is beautiful. An ever darkening greenish tinge creeping into the sky, and the pale stars beginning to wink. I have the same feeling I experienced on the Pacific Ocean, but not so much so. Then there was a feeling of dread; of having launched forth into the unknown and not being able to turn back. Now the sense of danger is gone, but the loneliness is upon me, a sense of which cannot be conveyed by pen or most eloquent tongue; the sensation of being alone in space, floating on a sea of ether under the stars where no sound reaches from the invisible earth below.

9 p. m.—Two thousand three hundred and seventy miles west of Bombay and three hundred and seventy miles inland.

Still lonely. I wonder if Lucile is thinking of me! I have thought of her many times. Women are strange. There's a saying that even God does not understand them. Lucile renounced me when I refused to withdraw from the race. She knew Bradley, poor fellow. I took her away from him.

No wonder the Arabs were astronomers. This desert is certainly an ideal place to study the dome of heaven. In a vast circle clear down to the floor of the desert, the stars are burning like jewels, the atmosphere is so clear. The golden crescent moon is just rocking off the desert. It looks as though it were tiptoeing the sand with one of its horns. A Lilliputian, apparently, could reach up and drag it down. The moon takes twenty-eight days, on an average, to beat it around the earth. I think I am going to cut her best record in two.

Well! Time to take a little rest now. There's a low range of mountains on the west coast of Arabia on the Red Sea. Guess I'll get up about five thousand feet so I won't bump into it in case I should oversleep. Speed will be kept at one hundred and sixty miles an hour to-night, as I want to make the coast by early morning.

October 7th, 6 a. m.—On the Red Sea three thousand seven hundred miles west of Bombay. Latitude 18° 53′ 54″ north. Longitude 40° east. More than half around the world. Think of it! And my flying time only six days. I am now making northing and westing, by following the coast line which trends to the northwest for about one thousand miles from where I am now. I ought to be in Port Said by eleven or twelve o'clock.

Have been flying along the coast of Arabia, which is mostly a narrow sandy plain, backed by low, rugged, barren mountains, in vivid colors of yellow and purple, and atmospheric hazes of blue, breaking the cloudless sky, and a dash of desert in pale yellow in the foreground, with here and there a clump of wild date palms casting their shadows on the cliffs. To complete

the picture I need only to see out of a mountain pass a caravan swinging into view. This is the Red Sea of Bible fame where the great wind held back the waters, that Moses might lead the Israelites out of bondage, and the hosts of Pharaoh were swallowed up by the returning waves.

By Jove, there's a caravan! Something doing.

8 a. m.—In camp on the coast, about six hundred miles from Port Said. When I sighted the caravan I saw that something was wrong. The whole outfit was straining to the north at top speed. I looked ahead and saw far in the lead a figure on horseback riding as if for life. With my glass I saw that it was a woman. I had not been seen, because I was out beyond the coral reefs. I wanted to see that woman, and, if necessary, to render assistance. Dropping to an altitude of fifty feet, but keeping over the water, I soon was abreast of her. When I saw the terror in her face I swung around on a curve, and at an altitude of twenty-five feet, and a speed of forty miles an hour headed back over the level desert straight at the caravan. I had raised the muffler and the noise was terrific. The effect was electrifying. The whole cavalcade of horses and camels reared and plunged at the sound of my propellers, and with cries of "Allah! Akbah!" took to flight. I buzzed around them like a mad gadfly until I had chased them into the mountains.

When I left them I soared into the air, turned to the north and looked for the woman. She was still riding to the north, a couple of miles away, occasionally looking back over her shoulder. At reduced speed I soon hovered over her, much to her fright, and called to her in English. I was greatly amazed when she answered in that tongue. For fear of frightening her horse, I landed a mile farther on and waited for her to join me. She was much relieved when I took off my helmet.

Her name is Ilzaide. She is a Persian by birth, but when five years of age was stolen by Bedouins and sold into slavery. The dealer, pleased with her marvelous beauty, educated her accordingly, in order that she might bring a high price from some nabob seeking a beautiful and accomplished wife. She speaks several languages, and English with a most captivating accent. I rescued her from the dealer, whom she feared and from whom she was fleeing. They were on their way to Mecca. She assures me that, should she fall into his hands again, he would cut her to pieces and throw her to the vultures. Her ethics are purely Eastern and rather shocking to the Western mind. She is mine, she says, for I took her from her master. She is my slave and implores me to take her with me.

Ilzaide is the most beautiful girl I have ever seen, and knows her charms. "Master! take me for your wife!" she cried, drawing her silken robe close about her perfect form. She is a vivid Eastern Caucasian; has marvelously white skin, carmine lips, the bluest eyes, cheeks stained with the blood of roses, and clad in Eastern raiment of silk, with little satin slippers curved to a point, she is a knock-out! What am I to do with her?

9 a. m.—Have decided to carry Ilzaide into some country of Europe. It certainly would mean death to leave her here. I'll have to make myself responsible for her keep, as she will be regarded as a pauper, unless she has a silken purse of gold hidden somewhere in her raiment. Probably she has. My plane was built for a flying mate, but I decided to go it alone on account of attempts to steal the secret of my engine. Ilzaide is intelligent, and can go on watch while I rest, but I don't want her to monkey with the levers.

11 a. m.—In the air. Have cut another four hundred miles off the trip. Ilzaide is a trump. She allowed me to strap her in the seat. She says she is mine and I can do as I please with her. She wasn't frightened at all as we took the air and went up a thousand feet. Haven't seen much of Arabia, because I am flying between the mountains and the shore, over desert land, however, which I presume is much like that to the east of the mounthins. Vegetation is seen only at the occasional oasis or well, where are the usual clumps of palm trees and some verdure. To the northeast, Ilzaide informs me, the country is very beautiful with its groves of date palms.

Up to the present time it has been a lonesome trip, but for the last hour I have had exceeding pleasure in Ilzaide's conversation. She calls me her master. The construction of her English and her accent is charming, accompanied as it is by the art of her sex the world over: the expression of her face, a smile displaying a flash of small white teeth, a pout of pretty lips, the elevation of

perfectly arched eyebrows, a toss of her pretty head, and shrug of shapely shoulders. Yes! She has an art that would fascinate a social cynic. She has read a great deal, too, and with much naïveté asked about the suffragettes, and was amazed when I told her that in my country the women are equal to the men. Her astonishment was great when I told her of all the liberties of women in civilized countries.

1 p. m.—Two hundred miles out over the Mediterranean Sea making a bee line for Rome which is a thousand miles away. Ilzaide has promised to be quiet while I write. After my experience in the vicinity of Port Said, I want to shake the atmosphere of the Mohammedan section of the earth off my wings as soon as I can. I didn't even phone as we passed over Port Said at an elevation of two thousand feet. We probably were not seen, though no doubt they were looking for a strange craft in the air. At noon we had settled down on the desert a mile south of the town, near a grove of date palms, thinking to be unobserved. In the midst of our luncheon we were startled by the appearance of a mounted Arab. He galloped right up to us and threw himself from his horse on to me before I could think. I don't know what he was saying to me, but it sounded venomous and deadly. Ilzaide says he called me a Christian dog and otherwise reviled me. That's all she will say. He was getting the best of me, having taken me at a disadvantage, and being a large man. His big murderous scimitar would no doubt have beheaded me had it not been for Ilzaide. She pulled a little jeweled dagger from her bosom and stuck him with it good and plenty. There is one Arab less in Arabia. We left immediately for Italy.

Ilzaide has complained of the stiffness of her limbs, so will land on the island of Crete, which the chart shows to be on the direct line of our route. Crete! The name brings memories of Grecian mythology.

I thought to regale Ilzaide, while in this historic region with some of the Grecian myths; the Argonauts, the Golden Fleece, and others, but I found that she knew more about them than I. The adventures of Ulysses she says are similar to Sindbad's.

Land ho! Straight ahead about fifty miles away is a large body of land which I believe to be Crete, where we will alight for refreshments and a brief rest.

1:30 p. m.—We have landed on the most southerly portion of Europe, the island of Crete. No need to take an observation. I am not going to bother with longitude and latitude any more, until I get on the Atlantic Ocean. It is necessary on a ship, but not on a swift aëroplane.

This island is mostly mountainous, reaching an altitude of eight thousand five hundred feet at the highest. I was wise to skirt its eastern extremity and land in a cove on its northern coast. Ilzaide is delighted with its rugged grandeur and verdant pastures that can be seen on the heights. We are becoming well acquainted. She is quite interested in the social system in the United States and deplores the fact that there are no slaves. "I am yours," she says, "and your laws say that this cannot be! What shall I do?" And I am at a loss to answer. I do not know what to do with her. She is beautiful, refined, cultured according to the Eastern idea, and wholly dependent. I wonder what Lucile will think, and what account I am to give wherever we land, of my versatile companion. This is a strange world!

Ilzaide has chidden me for writing so much, and, though I explained that I am keeping a journal of my flight, I had to take her for a stroll on the beach.

1:55 p. m.—We must be on our way by two, as it is eight hundred miles to Rome from here. Four hundred and fifty miles of it is by sea, and I want daylight all the way to the nearest land.

2 p. m.—In the air. Will fly the whole length of the northern coast of the island, which will carry us in a direct line to Messina, in northern Sicily, from whence we will shoot up the coast to Naples. Have changed my mind about going direct to Rome.

5 p. m.—Landed in public square at Messina. We were frightened by the rabble. Worst-looking crowd I ever saw. Ilzaide was in terror till we took the air again. Did not leave the plane. Heading west by north over Tyrrenian Sea for Naples.

6 p. m.—Landed in Naples a few minutes ago. My watch was only thirty minutes out with the clocks of Naples. Have been setting it ahead four minutes for every degree of longitude passed since leaving Bombay, taking my longitude from the map when on the west coast of Arabia and at Crete.

12 midnight.—Will write briefly before re-

tiring. When we left Messina, we headed west by north on the one-hundred-and-eighty-mile flight to Naples. Part of the time we were about fifty miles from the mainland, the sea making an indentation in the coast between the two cities. It was not long before we saw Mount Vesuvius dead ahead, and this was the landmark for which I was looking. It was twilight before the famous volcano loomed over us, and we could see the lights of Naples and a picturesque vision it was, but description is not in my line. It made me think of the mountain-girt bay of San Francisco, with the lights all twinkling on the hills, with Tamalpais off in the distance. The deep-blue tone effects were the same.

We came down in the Villa Nazionale, or public gardens on the Riviera de Chiaja, a beautiful promenade, and to our good fortune in a quarter mostly effected by foreign residents and visitors. It was simply amazing the way the crowd surged about us, among whom were many Americans and Englishmen. I had some fears as to the safety of the machine, but the police or gendarmes or whatever they are called in Italy succeeded in keeping the crowd back.

I was startled to hear my name called. "Hello, Liston! Where in the world did you come from?" It was William Crocker, one time candidate for Mayor of San Francisco. When it became known that I was one of the contestants in the race around the world, the city went wild. There was a public demonstration in my honor, and I met many aces of wartime fame. Considerable amazement was expressed as to the presence of Ilzaide. I confided in Mr. Crocker the details of my dilemma, and he became one of a committee of Americans and Englishmen to see to our welfare. A guard was placed around the *Blue Streak*, and I was assured as to its safety. We then repaired to a hotel, the "Naples," I think it was called, and we were amply provided for, Ilzaide having a suite of rooms adjoining my own and a maid to wait on her. The comforts of a bath were delightful after the long flight.

When it came to our entertainment, I was sorry for Ilzaide. Her day had been crowded with unusual events. When I reflected that it was only that morning I found her fleeing for her life on the desert from which she had been caught up in a strange machine like the Magic Carpet, and carried through the air over the desert and sea for a thousand miles or more into a strange land among strange people, she in the meantime saving my life, I though it pretty strenuous. Ilzaide, however, has had a checkered career, and can adapt herself to any condition, from the languor of adolescence to the incarnate spirit of excitement. Her rich silken robes were not out of place in the box at the Theater Sannazaro, and her vivacious conversation, her Eastern ideas—in a naïveté of expression and charm of accent—made her the rage. I was proud of her. The ladies said she was a dear, and I could see were devoured with curiosity as to who she was and from whence she came.

It was with reluctance that our hosts consented to our retirement, but, realizing that we needed rest, and must continue the race with as little delay as possible, escorted us to our hotel. In the foyer Ilzaide requested that I wait for her return. "I am going to see my appearance in my new dress," she said. While she was gone Mr. Crocker placed in my hands a copy of a dispatch received by the Associated Press, an agent of which had interviewed me earlier in the evening. Its caption was: "Bradley Wins." My astonishment was so great that I could for a moment read no further; I had thought that Bradley was dead. Could he have played a trick in order to cause my delay? But it wasn't possible for him to get around the globe in a week. Then I read the dispatch:

> Charles Bradley, the aviator who flew from Los Angeles in the around-the-world race, fell into the Pacific Ocean a thousand miles out, where he floated for a day on his hydroaëroplane. He was rescued by a steamer of the Matson Navigation Company, bound from Honolulu to San Francisco. Arriving in that city, he married Miss Lucile Fordyce, the fiancée of Hal Liston, his competitor.

My feelings were a transition from indignation at Bradley's action to an unaccountable sense of relief and satisfaction. Ilzaide returned at that moment in conventional street attire, and was simply amazing. She was quick to notice that something had happened and gave me a questioning glance, so I told her about Lucile and what she had done. Her face was expressionless as she turned from me. I looked askance at her and she began lightly to sing some happy little song in a strange tongue. I think it was Arabian. She turned to me with a happy smile. "Master," she cried, "what

are you going to do with your faithful slave?"

"I don't know, Ilzaide," I answered. "I will decide when we get to Rome."

"You have not said if you like my gown," she deplored.

"I think it most beautiful with you in it," I answered. This was the first compliment I had offered her.

A flush came into her face, and her eyes were very bright as she said, "Allah preserve thee, master!" and retired to her room.

I then wrote two radios, one of congratulations to Lucile, and one of condolence to Bradley. I fancy that when they receive these messages from me, dated Naples, October 7, 1925, it will be rather startling.

At the desk I drew on the Banco Popolare Operi Italiano against my letter of credit, which the clerk cashed for me, deducting the amount from the letter, saying that the hotel's guarantee of signature would be satisfactory to the bank. This is the second draft I have drawn since leaving San Francisco; one in Bombay, the other in Naples, the only towns where I have alighted in which I could get money for contingent expenses. I think I'll walk into the Crocker National Bank of San Francisco, and ask to see them before they arrive for redemption. I am going to turn in now. It's near one a. m.

Naples, October 8, 1925, 6 a. m.—Have just inspected the *Blue Streak* and deem it advisable before crossing the Atlantic to put in new babbitt bearings and new wind break. Also to renew lubricant tanks. Ilzaide came down in her aviation dress, which was designed and made for her overnight. She certainly is, to use the vernacular, "a swell looker." We leave at seven a. m.

7:15 a. m.—We are over the water, following the coast line to Rome. I used to think I would like the "plaudits of the crowd," but in reality find it rather annoying when one is in a hurry. However, we managed to get away on schedule time. I know that I will finish the race in something like twenty days if all goes well, and I have a hunch that I will win. All the contestants have dropped out excepting Wood, of whom I have had no news. This does not cause me any uneasiness, as I am way ahead of my schedule.

I have been talking with Ilzaide, and am eager to know her true feeling for me, but she is unfathomable. I know she would marry me, for she considers herself my property and would be submissive. In fact, she once asked me to take her for a wife. I considered it lightly at the time. It was not possible and did not seem more than a proposition to avoid a cruel master.

To be thinking of her seriously now is rather sudden. However, at the rate at which I have been traveling, every incident has been sudden. But, in thinking it over, this isn't sudden at all, for, after picking Ilzaide up off the desert, I experienced in a subconscious way, a vague feeling of regret about something that made me heartsick. I didn't know that it was because I would have to set free the beautiful captive who had flown into my arms. When I learned of Lucile's marriage I experienced a feeling of relief and did not know, even then, that it was on account of Ilzaide. But it has come to me since. She is beautiful—adorable—lovable—and I want her! But does she love me? Can I be sure of that? I feel very uneasy, for Ilzaide is a problem. I am going to watch the expression of her face when I tell her we shall be married in Rome, and if it is joyous, I'll know. If not, it is all off until I can win her.

I tried my plan, but not as per program. I suppose it was the way I looked at her when I started to play my part that frightened her. Anyway, I got frightened myself, and switched off, making it vague as to who the man was to be. I clumsily said that when we reached Rome I would find her a husband who would be kind and worthy.

A look of grief came into her great eyes.

"And has the slave no heart?" she sighed. "Is she not permitted to have emotions? Master! I am like other women. I, too, have a heart that can love!"

"Then—you—love?" I asked, amazed.

"Even I! Master, a slave!"

"You are not a slave, Ilzaide!" I said. "You are free, and can marry whom you love!"

"Allah be praised!" she cried. "Ilzaide loves thee!"

It is marvelous how time flies. I got careless in the air and ran by Ostia at the mouth of the Tiber, which we intended following inland to Rome. We have decided not to go there at all now, and to be married in this little town of Palo.

The United States consul insisted we should not make it a hurried affair. "The circumstances are so unusual," he said. He

gave us a splendid wedding such as you read about in beautiful Old World stories. It was one o'clock when he wished us bon voyage, and I am congratulating myself that he happened to be in Palo. He is one of the finest of men and was proud of my achievement as an American.

One hundred miles from Rome, flying west by north, with the island of Monte Cristo in sight. Passed over the island.

2 p. m.—We are flying over Corsica from which Napoleon came.

2:15.—We have crossed Corsica and are over the Mediterranean, heading for Narbonne near the River Aude in southern France, with the Pyrenees for a landmark one hundred miles away. Our elevation is six thousand feet. We had to get up some to cross Corsica.

2:30 p. m.—In the shadow of the Pyrenees which from warts become pygmies and from pygmies giants rising up out of the water as we advanced. It pleased my pride in my accuracy to pick up the town of Narbonne, near the Aude, several miles inland from the eastern coast of southern France. As there was no necessity for landing, we passed over it at our height of six thousand feet and probably were not seen. We will keep this elevation, as there are a number of mountain spurs we will have to cross. It is two hundred and sixty miles to Biarritz on the west coast, where we will land at about four p. m. in order to make our whereabouts known to the friends we have made in the different stopping places, who have evolved a keen interest in our progress. Possibly we may be able to secure some American newspapers.

3:30 p. m.—We have passed over some fine forests, but are now flying over a low sandy country where the streams coming down from the Pyrenees spread out like silver ribs of a fan. The country is so level that we have come down to an altitude of two hundred feet in order to see the land more in detail. There are many sand dunes. It looks like this country was once under the sea. The ground is marshy in places. We have seen some immense herds. The shepherds were mounted on high stilts and got over the ground and bushes with marvelous speed, taking long strides. I succeeded in getting Biarritz by wireless. They are insistent that we stop for at least a quarter of an hour and say they have American newspapers.

5 p. m.—In the air en route for Brest. I did not know that Biarritz was a watering place of some importance. It was a treat to Ilzaide to bathe in the surf. She did not like being splashed. Her beautiful hair, the color of henna, came down and floated like a mass of seaweed in the water. Venus rising from the sea could not have been more lovely than Ilzaide when she laughingly flung back her hair from her shapely white arms. We were much refreshed and rested when we held a levee in the casino. Taking it all together we made quite a splash in Biarritz.

I am much disappointed to find that the newspapers are all ten days old and published before I left San Francisco. That event seems ages ago! Only seven days actual time and here I am in Europe. I have been going some, thanks to that hurricane on the Pacific Ocean. Hope we don't strike any storms on the Atlantic. The weather has been fine since then. Haven't even thought of the barometer.

Will not be at Brest till eight o'clock at night owing to the hour we spent at Biarritz. Have no doubt, however, that there will be an illuminated place where we can land.

8 p. m.—Have not seen land, or rather lights. It is quite dark, and I am somewhat alarmed. Guess we have been heading too much to the west, and if we keep on might, in time, reach Greenland. Ilzaide does not seem to be uneasy. I am going to head due east until we see land lights.

8:30 p. m.—Sighted a lighthouse. Called on wireless and found it to be Point St. Mathieu. We are holding our course due east right up the bay, keeping a keen lookout for Brest. Came very near being lost.

Brest, October 9, 1925, 6 a. m.—These Frenchmen certainly are an enthusiastic people. When it was learned in Paris that I had left Naples for Rome, a bunch of aviators figured what my course would be and figured it right. They thought I would be in Brest at eight p. m., and were here to meet us. When we did not show up on time there was much anxiety on our account. They thought we had met with an accident or were lost somewhere out on the Atlantic. The city was brilliantly illuminated, so that we saw it a long way off. It looked like two great pyramids coruscated with electric lights.

We landed in the Botanical Gardens,

where we received a royal welcome. I dreaded this ordeal and would rather have spent the evening in the seclusion of our hotel, but this the hospitable fellows would not permit. They regaled us until midnight. Most of them were men of whom I had read in the war news. They have all brought their machines with them, many being passenger carriers, and it seems that I am to lead a flock of aëroplanes across the English Channel. I did not like the idea at first, but was assured that they were all equipped with pontoons and in case of accident I was not to concern myself as to their safety, so I had to submit. We leave at nine a. m. and fly north over about twenty miles of land before we strike the Channel. I have received a dispatch to attend an aviation meet near Plymouth. Only an hour of my time is asked, and I am offered five thousand pounds to give a demonstration. I wired my acceptance, as it will not be much out of my way.

7 a. m.—Have just inspected twenty aëroplanes. They are all up to date, some of them huge twenty-passenger affairs, and will be loaded with guests. I have been appointed admiral of the fleet and have placed the machines in the form of an angle, mine at the apex, and ten on each side. I will take the air first and the other five pairs will follow one after the other, and like a flock of wild geese we will take our V-shaped flight to the north. It will be a great sight for the spectators, but no novelty to the French people who have seen squadrons of planes in battle array and in action.

9:30 a. m.—Made our get-away successfully and in twenty minutes were over the English Channel. We must look like a flock of huge white pelicans to the steamers and other craft plying between the seaports of Plymouth, Portsmouth, and Dover on the British side, and Cherbourg, Havre, and other ports on the northern coast of France. We are all flying at the same height, about five hundred feet above the sea, fifty feet apart, going a mile a minute in the formation of an angle all heading due north so that there is no danger of collision. I am to receive photographs that were taken of the fleet as we left Brest and of those that will be taken when we alight at the aviation field a mile west of Plymouth.

As we look down on the Channel I am reminded of some of the stirring tales I have read of privateering in old sailing vessels, between England and France, and of the smugglers between the two countries, particularly a novel entitled "Poor Jack" and another "Cast Up by the Sea." We are flying over Plymouth. I see big guns mounted on grassy embankments all around the city, like at the old Presidio in San Francisco. We are heading for the aviation field which can be seen about a mile from here in an extensive hollow surrounded by lofty hills. Came down in perfect formation, crowd wildly cheering.

11:30 a. m.—In the refreshment bazaar on the field. While waiting for "tiffin," as these Englishmen are calling it, I will make this entry. These Frenchmen certainly are a demonstrative bunch. When I came down from the air they called me the humming-bird, and rushed at me, some of them actually hugging me as I was hoisted on the shoulders of others and carried to the grand stand.

My demonstration was like the antics of a humming-bird, hovering and darting from flower to flower. My balancing power is so great that I can reverse my propellers in the air and come to a stop, though slowly settling to earth, which gives the appearance of hovering like a bird. I hovered and ascended at a sharp side angle and descended at the opposite angle. I hovered and ascended on a right or a left curve, volplaned, spiraled, spun, looped and did all the stunts that I know. A draft for twenty thousand dollars in round numbers, on the National Park Bank of New York has just been handed to me by the treasurer of the meet.

My French friends would like to accompany me a part of the way out on the Atlantic, but have been induced to stay and enter some of the contests.

After "tiffin," I thoroughly inspected my planes and engine, putting in new babbitt bearings, replenishing my tanks and getting in shape for a long flight. I tried to persuade Ilzaide to take the steamer for New York, but she refused to be parted from me for an hour. Indeed, it was all I could do to have her leave me while I did my dangerous stunts in the air. Will not get away before twelve-thirty p. m. Do not like the delay.

1 p. m.—Over the English Channel. Latitude 50° north. I don't care about the longitude as the next land I see will be the

North American continent. I do care about knowing by latitude to some degree of accuracy, however, as the distance of my flight depends upon it, on the proposition that a straight line measures the shortest distance between two points.

I want to take the shortest distance over the water. All the factory whistles in Plymouth are blowing and so are all the steamers in the vicinity. We have had a grand send-off and are sailing slowly, enjoying the sight of the traffic. I believe we could trace our way across the Atlantic by the smoking funnels of the magnificent steamships from America en route to Liverpool, Bristol, Plymouth, Dover, Hamburg, Havre, Cherbourg, Brest, and countless other parts of Europe. It seems as though a steamer were arriving every minute. Have increased speed to two hundred miles an hour, and the wild and picturesque cliffs of Devonshire and Cornwall are sliding by, soon to be lost in the sea.

3 p. m.—Four hundred miles west of Plymouth. This would be a lonesome trip were it not for Ilzaide. I love to hear her talk and to watch the expression of her face. We have been through danger together, she and I. When I think of this dear, beautiful girl without a friend in all the world save myself, I am filled with a devotion that will make a place in the world for her. She has been telling me stories of her life in Persia and Arabia, colored with the languor of the "Lotus-Eaters" and the perfume and opulence of the East. I have been telling her of my hurdy-gurdy life in America and the time has quickly passed.

5 p. m.—Eight hundred miles out. Barometer oscillating at thirty. I think we will have fine weather all the way across, though a rather stiff breeze is on the port side. I wish it were behind us. Possibly we may make some leeway, but we should worry. Will not care, however, it will carry us nearer our destination. Overtook the *Mauretania* bound for New York and came down to an elevation of thirty feet. The passengers all crowded to the rail as we slowed down and accompanied them for several miles, carrying on a lively conversation. Then we said good-by, rose to a thousand feet, and sped on our way. The steamer shrunk to a speck on the horizon in a haze of smoke from her funnels, which soon disappeared.

6 p. m.—One thousand miles out. Ilzaide is preparing dinner. She enjoys the novelty. I'll never complain of Ilzaide's cooking. Hope she'll never have to cook. We saw the big old red sun that I have been chasing across land and sea, plunge into the ocean.

7 p. m.—The stars are streaming up from the floor of the ocean, some of them seemingly floating on the waves. Ilzaide knows the stars and pointed out Aldebaran and many others with Arabic names.

Sailing along in space, under the stars, far from land, in the night, again I am assailed by that fantasy of fear, a heart hunger, a yearning for companionship. I put out my hand and Ilzaide's comes into it, and in that clasp we are happy, sailing along the phantom shores of eternity.

9 p. m.—Sixteen hundred miles. A big steamship passed beneath us. "Hello," I called soon as we saw her all alight, like a new honeycomb dashing toward us. "Hello, who are you and where are you?" came the answer.

"The *Blue Streak*. In a minute we will be overhead, and who are you and where are you going?" I asked.

"This is the *Lusitania II.*, bound for Liverpool," came the wireless reply. I turned the searchlight on them. The *Blue Streak* was flooded by the light shaft from theirs, and the craft of the air and the craft of the sea had passed.

Ilzaide is going to sleep. I'll wake her at midnight and take a rest myself until three in the morning. I'll set the plane and annunciator. Ilzaide knows all the levers, but has promised not to touch them while I am asleep. Speed reduced to one hundred miles an hour.

Midnight.—Nineteen hundred miles. Woke Ilzaide, who now goes on watch. Heading south by west. Will keep on this course.

My birdman writes much in this book. I will write, too. I am not much to write the English. He is ver' tired and has the sound slumber. He is ver' wonderful man to make machine that can fly. In his country there is no harem. Only the one wife. I am ver' happy. It is lonesome when he is 'sleep.

October 10, 3 a. m.—Two thousand two hundred miles. Ilzaide has made an entry in the log, and a quaint one it is. Her turn for slumber.

6 a. m.—Two thousand five hundred miles. Ilzaide on watch. Me for dreamland.

9 a. m.—Two thousand eight hundred miles. Speed is increased to two hundred miles an hour. Breakfast. Barometer a point below thirty. Heavy wind on port side. Must have made considerable leeway. Elevation five thousand feet. Ought to see land in a couple of hours.

Have seen a number of steamers and sailing vessels pass to the south and more coming at irregular intrevals. Think there must be a port to the southwest and consequently am steering south by west.

10 a. m.—Three thousand miles. Land ho! Hurrah! Sandy Hook answered my call on the wireless. They have been looking for us all along the coast since it became known that I had left Plymouth.

Bronx Park, 12 m.—Flags were flying and sirens screaming as we flew over the lower bay. Ilzaide was delighted with the Stars and Stripes and the noise of welcome as we glided along at an elevation of two hundred feet. Silent, majestic, colossal, loomed the imposing figure of Liberty on Bedloe's Island. When I told Ilzaide that it represented liberty enlightening the world, she was astonished that a woman should be chosen for the subject, her Eastern education still being dominant. We circled three times around it, and then at a speed of twenty miles an hour flew up the Hudson, over the yachts anchored in the stream, Ilzaide exclaiming at the stupendous structures towering into the sky. The water front was black with people from the Battery to the Bronx, where we came down in a grassy area of the park.

Mr. Jones of the National Park Bank of New York, seemed to spring out of the ground soon after we landed. He saw us from Broadway as we sailed up the Hudson, and immediately took the subway for the park. With the draft on his bank, I opened a joint account in the name of Ilzaide and myself. If anything should happen to me Ilzaide will have available funds. We are now awaiting the arrival of General Pershing of the U. S. army and Admiral Farrenboldt of the navy. Mr. Jones insists that we are his guests until we start on our flight across the United States in the morning. I intended starting this afternoon, but as I would like Ilzaide to see this wonderful city, have changed my mind.

Midnight.—You'd naturally think that when we arrived in a big city we'd be able to get a good night's rest after the long and sleepless hours in the air, but it would seem that our social duties preclude all self-consideration. There were people who wanted to see us, and we had to let ourselves be seen. When the general and the admiral arrived, they were ready to complete a deal with me for the purchase by the government of the rights of my plane, engine, and formula for oleumocine.

Mr. Jones placed the directors' room of the bank at our disposal, and he acting as my attorney, the deal was put through on paper. The matter is now in escrow until I return from San Francisco. I am to receive two million dollars and a pension of one thousand dollars a month for the rest of my life.

It seems that government experts have been keeping tab on me, and are amazed at my accomplishment in nine days, most of that time with a passenger. The efficiency of my machine has been proved to their satisfaction. I am to go on to San Francisco to complete the circuit and win the one-hundred-thousand-dollar prize. There are twenty-one days to do it in, and that I will win there is no doubt, as all my competitors are out of it, Aviator Wood being given up as lost.

I am not to build any aëroplanes excepting for myself to be used as pleasure crafts, and any improvements I may make will belong to the government. This suits me all right, for I will have all the money I need for the rest of my life.

We have been shown around the city in an automobile and have done all the tourist stunts. We have ridden on the elevated and in the subway and gone through the tubes under East River and did not feel as safe as while in the air. Ilzaide was delighted with Coney Island and the marvels of Luna Park. In her honor there was a ladies' night at the Army, Navy, and Aëro Club.

Well! We are glad the round of festivities is over and we can take much needed rest. Hereafter we will cut out the social end and take a full night's rest wherever we stop. Now for the "blessed Nirvana of sleep."

October 11, 11 a. m.—Leaving Albany. Left New York at ten a. m. and flew up the Hudson to this city. The weather is fine, being late Indian summer. Atmosphere is

clear and crisp, the foliage tinted with crimson and gold.

As we approached Albany, we rose to an elevation of five thousand feet, as we did not wish to create a sensation which might occasion delay. From here on I have been over the country, and as it is not new to me, my entries will be more brief, and with less description. We have turned at a right angle to our last course and are following the four tracks of the New York Central Railway to Buffalo and are making two hundred miles an hour.

12:30 p. m.—Passing over Buffalo, headed for Niagara.

12:45 p. m.—At Niagara.

1:30 p. m.—Leaving Buffalo—luncheon in the air—sailing along the northern shore of Lake Erie for Detroit. When in Niagara thought to edify Ilzaide by flying over the river above the Horseshoe Falls, then came down over the falls and dropped to an elevation of half their height into the mist that rose from the roaring caldron below, then sailed down the river toward the bridge, the little steamer passing under us. There were crowds of people on both sides of the river and on both bridges, silent as death. We rose over the bridge, then skimmed the rapids like a swallow down to the bend, and, rising to an elevation, circled and came back the same way. The crowd went wild and broke the silence with cheers. To say that Ilzaide was amazed would be to express it mildly. Never had she seen anything like it, nor anybody else, for that matter—as she saw it—excepting myself. We were the first to have the thrill of such an experience. In a couple of minutes we were back at Buffalo.

2:15 p. m.—Passing over Detroit without stopping—it was a fine view looking over the lake to the south and into Canada to the north. Sailing due west to strike Lake Michigan, when it will be an easy matter to pick up Chicago.

4:15 p. m.—Following Denver and Rio Grande Railroad out of Chicago for Omaha —Flying low over the prairie States.

5:30 p. m.—Looking for a landing in Omaha.

October 12th.—The people of Omaha are very hospitable. A crowd gathered immediately after we landed last night in one of the parks on the bluffs of the upper city. We pleaded our fatigue, and it was realized that the greatest kindness that could be shown was to allow us to retire to a hotel. I never slept so soundly in my life, and this morning we are much refreshed. At eight o'clock we leave after circling the city several times in order that the people might not be wholly disappointed in us.

8:30 a. m.—We have just passed over Lincoln, the capital of Nebraska. Met a lovely girl from this city in 1915 on the way to California. Her father was a professor in the Lincoln State University. Never thought of such a thing as flying then. It's like shooting over a big checkerboard, flying over cities like Chicago, Omaha, Council Bluffs, and Lincoln.

10:45 a. m.—We have covered Nebraska and part of Colorado. The Rocky Mountains are rapidly raising their blue peaks above the level of the plains.

11 a. m.—Passed over Denver, our elevation being five thousand five hundred feet.

12 m.—Royal Gorge. Our elevation is six thousand feet with six hundred feet to spare, and gradually ascending. We have on our paper gloves and mufflers as we expect to go very high. Made Tennessee Pass at an elevation of ten thousand five hundred feet with three hundred feet to spare. My engine is a marvel. The feed pipe is adjusting itself nicely to this atmosphere. This is our highest elevation. Soon we will be down to five thousand feet and have passed a number of snow-capped peaks.

1:30 p. m.—Leaving Salt Lake. The mountains are covered with a verdure that looks like moss. I am looking on a valley that reminds me of one in Sonoma County, California. Mountains now are gray, ragged rocks, with snow in crevasses. Just left Ogden, a small town on the Great Salt Lake, and are following Lucin cut-off across the lake. Great Salt Lake seems much like San Francisco Bay, with its surrounding mountains. Flying over deserts that are broken by distant upheavals of naked rocks.

4 p. m.—Reno. Glad to arrive after monotony of alkali deserts of Utah and Nevada. Great demonstration on the part of this sporty little town when we landed. Could make San Francisco by seven o'clock to-night at the latest, but as it grows dark early at this time of the year I have decided not to take any chances.

Palace Hotel, San Francisco, October 13, 1925, 2 p. m.—It was the most triumphant moment of my life when we shot out over the Pacific Ocean and completed the circum-

navigation of the globe at the spot from which I started. Indeed, it seemed as though I were to start all over again, but I am beginning at the wrong end of the record. We left Reno at ten o'clock this morning. In half an hour we were over the pine-crested hills and peaks of the Sierra Nevada Mountains which were a refreshing contrast to the alkali deserts of the day before. We felt the exhilaration of a new atmosphere as we looked down on the snow-sheds of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company, the road we had followed from Salt Lake. In fifteen minutes more we had crossed the summit where Aviator Fowler failed in 1911 through the inefficiency of his engine in the rarefied atmosphere. Then we were launched over fertile fields, orchards, and vineyards, meadows, dairies, and plowed lands lying fallow for the sowing.

"It is a beautiful land," said Ilzaide.

"It is a land 'flowing with milk and honey,' and San Francisco is its Mecca," I answered. At eleven o'clock we stopped at Sacramento, and San Francisco was advised that we would be there at twelve noon. I chose that hour because it was the time when the most people would be on the streets and could see us come in. We left Sacramento at five minutes after eleven and regulated our speed so as not to arrive ahead of time. Presently we were flying over the Suisun Marshes, out over the Bay at the Straits of Carquinez and making straight for San Francisco.

"It is Naples!" exclaimed Ilzaide as her eyes swept the ramparts of mountains encircling the bay. Tamalpais rose to our right, and she saw the outline of a woman lying face up, in eternal sleep.

"There is Mecca!" I said, pointing to the frowning hills of the city, with its domes and spires, and palaces.

We swooped out of the sky and flew low. The people on the ferryboats were crowding to the rails, and all the whistles in San Francisco and on the Bay were screaming a welcome. Straight for the Ferry Building we flew and circled three times around its tower to the frenzy of the crowd. Then slowly out Market Street we flew, just high enough to clear the tallest buildings. The streets were alive with people. A sea of faces was upturned to us and the roar of the multitude came to our ears when we waved our hands. We turned out McAllister Street to Golden Gate Park and saw the white surf falling on the beach. In another minute we were out over the Pacific, where the seals were barking on their rocks.

"Here, Ilzaide, is the place from which I started and my flight was westward as we are flying now. Always westward to the point of beginning."

GIVING SPORTSMEN THEIR DUE

STILL another blessing conferred upon us by the war: disappearance of the wiseacres who used to say Frenchmen were not real sportsmen because they spent all their time sipping absinth, quoting poetry, and thinking up ways to kick the seventh commandment into a cocked hat. American soldiers back from France are telling everybody that a nation which produced a man like Georges Carpentier is at the top in muscular power and in that greater attribute, fighting spirit.

Carpentier, who began his battles at thirteen years of age and polished off the first era of his career by twice knocking out the British heavyweight favorite, Bombardier Wells, was pulling off his gloves five minutes ahead of his country's decision to beat the boches.

After four years of war, he informed an American captain, he felt the need of all-round athletics to put him into class-one shape again. He wanted to be sure his eye was as quick as when he first entered the ring. Also, he was afraid his muscles were tangled up, overlapping each other like torpid cobras in a glass box.

He stuck to his program, tackled all kinds of out-door work, and, as a starter, won the first hurdle race in which he was entered.

This veteran of ring and camp, by the way, is neither a Methuselah nor a Rip van Winkle. In spite of his eight years in the ring and four in war, he is only twenty-five years old.

From Dusk to Daylight

By George Bronson-Howard

Author of "The Black Book," "Norroy," Etc.

An adventure of New York's "Mad Thursday" which was not reported in the newspapers among the other frenzies of those historic hours. The author discovers to us a situation in an old Knickerbocker family that is frankly hair-raising, and into that situation plunges a stranger who is destined to change the whole course of the Van Hollyhocks. It is a story teeming with excitement.

(A Two-Part Story—Part I.)

THE FIRST HOUR.

How New York Went Mad upon the Night of November Seventh, Nineteen-eighteen.

NO one is apt to forget "Mad Thursday," the day when that somewhat premature announcement of peace set the whole world wild with joy. It would be decidedly supererogatory to describe it. Not only in New York, but all over the States in towns of any considerable size, the same sights were to be seen, the same sounds to be heard, the same madly exultant flag-waving, horn-tooting crowds were afoot, crammed in buses, or jammed in cars, the exhausts of which the police allowed to go open, any addition to the roar of joyful sound being deemed desirable. On ship or on car, wherever there was a siren—of the mechanical sort—it screamed every minute until midnight. Was the siren of the human sort, it screamed whenever it had the breath to do so, and was seen, oftener than not, on tiptoe, arms about the neck of some embarrassed, encrimsoned soldier or sailor, Yank, "Tommy," "Canuck," even "Froggy" or "Guinea," it mattered not, so long as he was a uniformed defender. The flags of our victorious armies were everywhere entwined; the flags of those who had stood for the right of the strong to protect the weak, not trample on them, until our cause was won.

I say "our cause," although had you seen me then, you might have taken me for a pacifist or a Bolshevist or anything else opposed to the existing order. Of all the throng that had jubilated since the astounding splendor of the news had been made known to them, I was, I dare say, the only normal person who stood aloof as if no such thing as an armistice had ever been heard of. Had I any other place to go, I would have gone there. As I had not, and was as penniless as I was homeless, I must tramp the streets amid exultant folk in whose joy I had no share.

Yet I had done more than most of those about me, not in uniform, to help bring about their joyous state of to-day. Two years ago I had quitted the state of Oliver Curlew, Esquire, for that of Trooper Curlew, Canadian Expeditionary Force; returning several months since as Lieutenant Curley, D. S. O. But now, far from having taken up my former state as "Esquire," I was hardly entitled to the appellation of "Mr."

Young men liable to be arrested for vagrancy any minute aren't, you know. And I had no means of support visible or otherwise. As far as the visible part went, it was all the other way; a useless arm dangled on my left side. The fact that it was useless through protecting the lives and liberties of those to whom I had applied for work, among others, seemed not to matter a rush.

I can see now that it was no cruel freak of Destiny that had caused my pro-German uncle to turn me from the door that

had been my father's when I went away: that had sent me, in my applications for employment, mental or manual, to those painted with the same tar brush, or similar ones. It happened that Destiny had a job for me to do, one involving large issues, and until I reached my penniless, homeless state of Mad Thursday, I was not eligible.

Not knowing this at the time, you can imagine why I scowled at the swaying, swirling, shouting throngs that blew tin horns, whirled wooden rattles, and waved flags. The sight of girls embracing enlisted men made me bitter.

"Wait until you need cash instead of kisses," I addressed them silently; "wait until you want a job from that pampered darling's papa."

So soured was I that I turned away from the main thoroughfares and for hours wandered in the quiet, crooked byways of old Greenwich. When these devious ways finally brought me back to Washington Square, it was dark and deserted. All the little lights had broken out in all the little windows until the square looked like a huge room with four dark walls hung with pictures in bright oranges, pale yellows, and occasional greens; wainscoted in green for fifteen feet of its height, for, end to end, encompassing the curbing on all four sides of the square, stood rows of empty, unlighted omnibuses.

These had been abandoned hours before, the crowd being too thick for them to navigate. It was still too thick, but its tail end was well above the Brevoort, and it was wallowing on its unwieldy way toward upper Broadway. The sounds of it in progress were wafted back to us, but the square itself was as silent as it was deserted; not a soul in sight.

As I stepped from Waverly Place into the silent, deserted square, a big, boisterous wind buffeted me about for nearly a block; until, puffing, panting, and shivering, I braced myself in the lee of an Old World flight of white marble steps. They were as broad as those of a Greek temple, on the lines of which the house itself was designed; as witness a pair of Corinthian pillars and a portico.

A bright, orange-colored patch in the red-brick facade of this old-time mansion bore further witness to shadow lamps, and leaping firelight shining through the lace curtains and Holland blinds of the bay window.

My uncle's home—mine before I went to war—had a window just like that; one where, as a child, I had crouched on the soft cushions of the window seat to read by the dying daylight.

If you know anything about the history of my own town, which is Baltimore, you will realize that Mount Vernon Square is somewhat similar to that New York one in which I now stood. The houses thereabout have that same general type of architecture. So, consequently, my bitter memories of having been turned away from just such a house with just such a window and in just such a square only a few months before set up in me an unreasoning anger that extended to all who lived in such houses.

Consequently, when I saw a brick lying there close to the curb, I was not deterred by any conscientious scruples from the thought of throwing it.

I had read that the easiest way to get locked up and spend a more-or-less idle winter on the "Island," was to hurl a brick through somebody's window. Being accustomed to hard trench fare, the Island presented itself in no ill light as a winter residence. Because of my dangling arm, they must give me work I could do, clerical work, probably. The medical service I would receive gratis might result in my arm becoming normal again. Anyhow, at the worst, the Island offered warmth and food, and nowhere else had I been able to find anything else that did.

While I hesitated a bitter, cold blast came along to decide me. I picked up the brick and lest I miss I advanced until I was in a position where, if I had chosen to raise myself on tiptoe, I could have looked through a parting of the curtains directly into the room.

Do not think I am wasting words in thus giving my exact position. It was necessary for me to cast back until I remembered this same exact position before I managed to puzzle out the reason for the reception soon to be accorded me. So keep that position in mind.

Thus standing, I raised the hand holding the brick, and, aiming it accurately, let it go smashing through the precise center of the big bay window.

"There, damn you!" I muttered, as the window smashed and a shower of glass tinkled down outside and in. I moved closer.

The velvet curtains were suddenly drawn apart by a shaking hand and the face of the worst frightened man I have ever seen looked down, his shifty eyes meeting mine.

"Call the police," I demanded defiantly.

He gave me another of his shifty, startled looks, dropped the curtain and was gone. As I stood there, above all that tumult over on the Avenue—I remembered remarking it at the time as men do such things in times of stress—the church bells were beginning to toll the hour of eight.

THE SECOND HOUR.

How I Came into Hollyhock House.

I.

THE MYSTERIOUS HAPPENING IN THE HALL.

"Now for a loud protest, a complaint, and a short journey to a warm jail," I thought expectantly, and advanced until I was within reaching distance of any one who came out to seize me.

The storm doors above were flung open as if the flinger had expected them to weigh two tons. They crashed against the house, framing the figure of a bareheaded young man in a panel of dim light from behind. The heavy doors rebounding against him, he tottered forward to the top step and would have fallen had I not launched myself upward and caught him by the collar.

I realize now that I must have collared him very roughly, but one doesn't try to be gentle when saving a fellow from cracking his head on the sidewalk. He hung for a second or so, head downward, as I held him.

But it was long enough for me to see all I wanted of the man I was to know so well as Horace van Hollyhock, IV.

His face was the one I had seen at the window. His was a slender body, in a slim-tailed coat, a long, slim waistcoat with long, slender points; and legs like the sort seen in advertisements of the godlike young men wearing "the perfect trousers."

His glossy hair had evidently been cut a few minutes ago, just after which his perfect valet had shaved him. His tie, although black, was of so rich a hue it seemed some kind of Oriental color.

But all favorable effect was lost when one looked above the collar and saw the shifty, startled eyes. What at first sight seemed the sort of face that went with the rest of an advertisement invented to make the rest of us sick with envy; was reduced to inessentials when he raised his eyes!

Immediately envy left me. I was satisfied. Little as well as shifty, as hard and round as green marbles, they were wolf's eyes if I know a wolf from a house dog. I reconsidered his face from the angle of general contour: it was vulpine.

Instinctively, I suppose, I stiffened as the house dog would at sight of the wolf. There was an expression about his face I failed to understand.

"Phoned for the police yet?" I demanded, making my tone as offensive as possible.

He eyed me. By this time I was genuinely puzzled. I would never have eyed any one that way who had smashed my nicest front window.

"You threw that brick, did you?" he asked in a queer, colorless sort of way.

It was my turn to eye him.

"Come in," he said slowly. He seemed trying to get himself under control, but it was hard work. "Come in; we'll attract attention out here."

"That's what I want to do. I want to attract a lot of attention. Enough attention for the police to come and you to charge me with throwing a brick through your window. That's all I want. Modest, ain't I? All I want is the police."

"Come in, *please*," he urged.

It is difficult to keep up a consistent show of offense when the other part of the sketch, so to speak, refuses to do his share.

"Oh, you want to *telephone* for them? Of course! Is the air too chilly for mamma's baby boy?"

This was by way of being the best I could do in jeering of the coarsest nature. The tone was assumed to suit the text. But I suppose mimicry is a God-given gift, and I have not got it. For all he did was to repeat his request in the same colorless way, and, because habit is stronger than pretense, and my habit is to be civil to the civil, I complied before I thought.

So there I was inside the house I was to know so well; under the roof where many quaint and curious things were due to happen before I was many minutes older.

"Well, now I'm here, suppose you telephone the police? I'm in."

It is desperately hard to recapture a mood like that coarseness of mine which at best was only assumed. Besides, what I call my brain was busy on another job: what was

he after? So I suppose I failed to be convincing.

"You threw that brick?" he asked, faintly this time.

"Why don't you send for the police and find out? They tell me they give people the third degree over there and make 'em tell whatever they want to know. Why not try it out? Go on, phone."

Far from doing that, he first put the forefinger of his right hand to the right of his collar, then found similar occupation for his left forefinger.

"From where you were standing out there, could you see what was happening in the front room?" he asked, so faintly I hardly heard him. "And then did you throw that brick? Was—was that it?"

Muddled and mixed-up as my mind was from all this rigmarole, I continued to hold firm to the original impulse that had prompted my crime, repeating doggedly:

"Send for the police. Let them ask me. They won't need any third degree to get me to answer. Go on—phone——"

He gave back a step or so at this, and the down-shot rays from an odd old lantern overhead turned his face into a futuristic nightmare, a different ray for each feature, for the light streamed through many colored sections of glass. His nose became green, one ear red, the other yellow.

Under such conditions, it is no wonder I found his forced grin a bit ghastly and shuddered a little. He noticed it.

"What's the matter?" he barked at me hoarsely.

It was then that a cracked old voice, from somewhere out of the surrounding gloom, called: "Horace."

It was a wide old hall, the sort that goes with what our grandfathers called a double house. Rooms opened off on either side, their doors draped with dark velvet, the same shade with which the floor was carpeted. A few straggling rays of a less unusual sort than the overhead lighting straggled through the curtains on the left. When the fretful call of "Horace" was repeated for the second time, I identified it as coming from the left, too.

"Horace" began a new effort to get a better grip on himself.

"Yes, grandfather."

"Bring the man in here," the cracked voice directed.

"I'll attend to it, grandfather."

Suddenly Horace whirled on me, one hand back of him holding the draperies together, the other going to an inside pocket.

"How much?" he demanded in a whisper that came sibilantly from between tightly locked teeth.

The utterly unveracious theory I had been formulating was given further impetus. His shaking hands and frightened, shifty eyes all pointed to a fear quite natural to a coward. I began to believe that Horace thought I had been able to see into the room when I threw the brick—as, actually, I was, although I had made no attempt to do so—that I had aimed it directly *at him*. That being the case, I was only mocking him when I directed him to send for the police. At his first attempt to do so, taking advantage of the silent square and the uproar elsewhere, I would fall upon him, beat him into insensibility, and rifle the house. It would be easy enough with everybody else out of it, except himself and his grandfather as I gathered was the case. Therefore, it was cheaper and easier to bribe me to go away, and that is what he was trying to do.

You must admit, with the little I had to go on that this was a plausible enough theory. At any rate, believing in it, I flushed angrily.

"None of that now. You send for the police. That's the only way you'll get rid of me. I threw that brick because——"

Before I could tell the now thoroughly terrified Horace my real reason the old man's voice shrilled out again:

"Horace, bring that man in here."

"Get out," whispered Horace hoarsely, cramming into my hand a sheaf of new money.

Even in that light I saw the three Roman numerals that beautified the top bill. The others shared its yellow hue. I stared agape. The entire amount could be little less than five hundred.

But for all my hunger and homelessness, first instincts survived. My anger increased.

"Take it back," I commanded hotly. "Call for the police. I threw that brick because I wanted——"

He clapped a hand over my mouth. His terror was pitiful.

"Ssh! Ssh! There's more to come if you'll only keep still!" he cried. His abasement was utter.

In the silence following his wail, I had

heard the sound of a wheeled chair dropping from rug to bare floor, from floor to rug again. The figure of the oldest man I ever saw now appeared in the doorway, back bent to the propelling of his chair, one hand snatching aside the curtain.

A flood of light illuminated the dark hallway. At a queer whirring sound from the rear, I turned to view the tallest of all great grandfather's clocks just as the man at the door was the oldest of great-grandfathers.

The whirring sound ceased with the flying open of a little door above the dial, disclosing two little figures pulling two little bells that chimed out the half hour.

Half after eight!

"Come in," said the oldest of great-grandfathers.

II.

A VOICE FROM THE DEAD: I TAKE THE PLACE OF ANOTHER OLIVER.

"All right, grandfather: I was just asking——"

"Never mind what you were just asking. You were asked to obey me, first. Wheel me back to the fire. Carefully, now. Come, my man."

The old man had hardly looked at me, or he would have seen the sheaf of bills. When Horace had turned his chair about, he motioned to me to put them away, which I did unwillingly enough. Following which, his finger went to his lips in agonized appeal.

That he should urge me to be silent fitted in well enough with my theory. If Horace thought I had aimed that brick at either himself or his ancient relative, it seemed natural, at the time, that he should wish me to keep silence in the old man's presence. This frail shell of a man was holding on to life only by dogged psychical persistence and the thought that he and his precious possessions were at the mercy of a burglar, might be sufficient to extinguish the feeble spark of life left.

Horace, still shuddering, pushed him to the fire ahead, one finger still to his lips.

It was a real library, the sort that existed before doses of contemporaneous "interior decoration" turned books to precisely the same purpose as draperies: to match the furniture in the period of their binding, the upholstery in their color and gilt stamping.

"Ha, there you are!"

Now that I had a good look at him, I did not need to see that each one of the four walls was lined with built-in bookshelves, upon which stood whole troops of sturdy Smolletts and Fieldings and Peacocks; battalions of Dickens, Thackerays, Ainsworths, Oliphants, Trollopes, and Mrs. Gaskell; platoons of Coopers and Hawthornes and Poes. He matched these in his attire.

He was easily the oldest man I had ever seen, also the frailest, most fragile; more like a carved ivory chessman than a man. It would have taken a Tenniel or a Howard Pyle, or an Arthur Rackham to have painted his portrait; some one of those artists who imagine the gnarly looking old fellows met with in fairy tales.

He was in black from head to heel. His narrow braided trousers strapped down over brightly varnished boots, waistcoat of watered silk, tailed coat with velvet collar and high-peaked shoulders, and a bald head encased in black skull cap, all gave him something of the look of the Black Bishop in "Alice Through the Looking-glass." His only spot of color was a bright bit of red coral, made into a cameo pin that fastened together the black satin folds of the ascot below the black stock collar. Hidden altogether was the lawn shirt doubtless plaited and ruffled beneath it, if one could judge from soft strips of it that showed at wrists and neck.

Now that he was again before his fire, he seemed in a better humor.

"Welcome, anarch," he cried in his highest, crackiest croak, stretching out hands toward the red bricks of the fireplace, where a great log fire leaped high—hands that needed only gold finger-nail guards to look like those of a Chinese mandarin. "Like an open fire? Here's a famous one. Come and get warm, sir. Like a bowl of piping-hot punch? Peahen shall make some."

He had cocked his head on one side like a bird, the eyes peering up at me inquisitively. There was a suggestion of the bird about his eyes, too, bright and beady, and about his nose, a huge bony one like a beak.

He reached out one of his yellow ivory hands to ring for his factotum.

"Here's whisky," Horace interposed sourly. "How many times must I tell you, grandfather, that the servants are all off to the victory celebration to-night? Anyhow, the man doubtless prefers whisky. Don't you?"

Under the pretense of asking me what I would drink he dropped his voice an octave, turning his face away that the old man might not read his lips.

"He thinks that you threw that brick through the window because you wanted to be sent to jail for the winter, like so many tramps do. At least he's heard they have. But the moment I saw you outside, I knew that——"

Horace broke off, shuddering.

"Stop that whispering," said the old man frowning. "I won't have it, Horace. Must I always be apologized for, even to the vagabond who breaks my windows? Although," he added, with an inclination of the head toward me, "you have not the appearance I expected, I grant you that."

"Any one can see he's not that sort, grandfather," whined Horace, who had been shifting uneasily ever since the word "vagabond."

"For once, I am inclined to agree with you," said the old man, in the same courteous way. "My wonder at his actions then is only equaled by amazement at your benevolence, Horace."

He cocked his head up at me again, surveying me like a surprised sparrow. I had forgotten that the sort that has to resort to throwing bricks does not brush its hair or go about clean shaven, and with clean shirt and collar. As for my light lounge clothes, they were from one of the more notable of London tailors, and were only just beginning to show the effects of being worn every day, and pressed, by their wearer, every night—in fact, of being the only civilian suit he possessed.

"Why did you break my window?" suddenly snapped the ancient one, his study of me completed. "Answer me that, my friend, before you drink my whisky. Obviously one cannot summon one's manservant to eject one with whom he has drunk. Give him no whisky till he answers, Horace."

Horace's vulpine face was ashen-gray. He had forgotten that this cavalier treatment was to be expected from so peppery a customer as the gaffer. Believing as he did that he alone knew my real reason for flinging that brick, and fearing that the ancient's all-unknowing ingratitude would arouse me to sudden anger during which I would blurt out the truth and begin my felonious business instanter, Horace had good reason to go gray.

"You'll have to forgive him," he whispered excitedly. "He doesn't know *why* you threw it, you see. And for God's sake, don't tell him!"

He was almost put to wringing his hands when, ignoring him, I stepped across to the fire. I thought, then, that Horace was afraid I was about to assault him, but that shows how little I knew Horace.

"Why did you throw that brick, sir?" the old man rasped out again.

The "sir" was not a respectful form of address recognizing me as his equal, but the way he doubtless had addressed his sons before thrashing them for something he wished they could explain satisfactorily. The innate kindness of the old fellow took hold of me. He would believe me when I told him the truth. He knew men better than this cowardly thing of a Horace.

"You guessed why, sir. Because I was cold and hungry and knew no speedier way of changing both conditions." And I smiled.

I hope you will not think I overrate myself when I say that I know some people like my smile. Older men have told me it is boyish, ingenuous. I used it now, not that I felt like smiling, but because I was tired of any one taking me for a potential murderer, even momentarily.

"I'm sorry about that broken window. I wouldn't have selected yours had I known an old gentleman like you was behind it. But it was the only lower lighted window in the block, and I was very weary. I've been tramping about all day on an empty stomach, and as I wasn't built to beg, and no one would give me work—and, well, as I knew one place where I could get food and warmth for the winter—and that brick was lying right there——"

The birdlike eyes were beaming on me, now.

"I'll come to-morrow and fix the window. And if you'll advance me enough to buy the materials, I'll pay you back by doing odd jobs about here. Surely I can do enough to earn my bread and board even if I have got a useless arm—although no one believes me. That's what enraged me so, especially to-day with the city going wild over the victory that came about through fellows like me giving up the use of their arms—maybe forever. Over there, where so many gave so much more, it didn't seem so much. Besides, I was in uniform, then, and an officer, and all. But back here, with millions of

uninjured people all around me, it seems unjust I can't even find work to do."

I had gone on to so great a length encouraged by the sympathy in the old man's eyes.

"You were over there?"

The eyes were not so birdlike now, nor so bright, the old head drooped down upon the satin folds of his stock.

I nodded, beginning to tell him where and when. He caught at a phrase famous for all time now.

"The Marne—the Marne. I had a grandson there. You were with them when they were driven back; when we drove *them* back. For the last time. At Château-Thierry. Only the other day; yes, only the other day——"

He lifted his head suddenly, his old eyes dim.

"You didn't know him? Nolly van Hollyhock? Another grandson. Horace's brother, although one wouldn't believe it if one didn't know."

He sat and stared silently so long I might have thought he had a seizure had it not been for the sadness in his eyes.

"Another grandson, yes," he concluded suddenly. "What's *your* name, eh?"

"O. P. Curlew, 3d," I answered, instinctively reducing my first name to an initial.

"Yes, yes, it does take at least three of them before one has a nose like yours. And ears. The shape of the head tells, too; not lumpy or bumpy, both bad. Well, then, Mr. O. P. Curlew, 3d, what's your Christian name. Eh?"

But I had understood the silence and the sadness connected with that grandson who was my namesake too well to tell him. It would sound too grossly opportune. Coincidences from unknown folk are poor fare, indeed.

"I'd rather not say, sir. You might not believe me. But about the broken window. Do you agree? There's very little in the way of odd jobs I haven't learned since I first enlisted. I've been quick enough to learn anything that wasn't profitable, since I left Hopkins a few years ago."

His face was again alight, eager.

"Hopkins? What year?" I told him. "Horace! The *Green Bag* of that year."

Horace handed the volume down, sour-visaged, sere. One old hand riffled the pages of the bound-up numbers of our famous college magazine, while the fingers of the other fumbled for what seemed a single eyeglass, but which when pressed at a certain point blossomed out into a pince-nez. He bent its old-fashioned spring over the bridge of his high patrician nose, and peered down a column of names.

A long, old-ivory finger nail finally found what he was in search of:

"Ah! So *that's* why you wouldn't tell."

I could see that Horace was hoping that his grandfather had gained some information highly discreditable, the sort that would put an immediate quietus to the employment idea. But the old man's speech destroyed all such hopes.

"Very good spirit. Dashed delicate, damn me if it isn't. Your hand—Nolly!"

Horace looked scandalized, sorely put to it.

"Nolly's dead, grandfather," he tried to say in a tone that was mildly reproving.

"Confound you, sir. How dare you keep repeating that. I know you're glad—glad! You're not clever, Horace! I wouldn't be writing this over if you were." He struck the table at his side. Then, to me: "Your hand, Nolly."

"Grandfather, Nolly's——"

"Confound you, sir. Be still. This boy's name is Oliver, too. Oliver Prescott Curlew, 3d—read it for yourself."

He had been freeing the old-fashioned eyeglasses of what he doubtless deemed unmanly moisture, and now he smote the book with them.

"Yes! Read it for yourself. You wouldn't understand, of course, why he preferred to give me his initials after hearing my dead grandson was a Nolly, too. Do they call you Nolly at home?"

"My mother did," I answered drearily. "Both she and my father died while I was at the front. I didn't know it until I came back home—to find my uncle in it, and no place there for me. My father left nothing but debts, my uncle said."

The old man surveyed me, a wonderful sympathy in his old eyes.

"Ring for William, Horace, and have him show Nolly to—Nolly's room."

III.

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS.

When I regained my mental balance after this informal adoption into the house of Van Hollyhock, I stole a glance at Horace.

To describe him at that moment is beyond my poor powers, and I will not dodge the difficulty by dragging in the usual reference to "chalk" in a half-hearted attempt to convey some idea of his complexion at that moment. Anyhow, its color and consistency were more like cream cheese. His whole face seemed actually to sag, to become doughy.

He stood there—"transfixed" I suppose a story-writer would say. Or perhaps "as if he was turned to stone." At all events, there he stood like one experiencing disaster as unexpected as it was undeserved.

"To Oliver's *own* room, grandfather? You can't mean——"

The old man went on:

"You won't mind wheeling me about the square, Nolly? Peahen ponders too much upon the size of the legacy I'm going to leave him, so agrees with everything I say too fulsomely. Vicky is too plaguy dull; she cannot understand that her rheumatics and her religion, the state of her sinews and her soul, are objects of no earthly interest to me. The cook has no conversation. As for Horace, somehow I'm most infernally ill at ease with Horace, and——"

He broke off so suddenly I could see something new had occurred to him. He considered me thoughtfully.

"What brings an officer, and gentleman; a scholar—a Hopkins alumnus—to window-breaking? Eh?"

"I have no family except that uncle I spoke of. He calls himself a conscientious objector. I called him a pro-German since he said such things about the war that he might as well have told me to get out when I came home. I went to war before my country did: went off with a Canadian contingent in 'fifteen. By the time I came back with this useless arm, all my friends here had either gone over there by this time, now that we're in it, or else I've lost track of them. An officer's pay in the British army is less even than an American's, which isn't any too much; and I was only a first lieutenant at the very last, so I saved no money. I wasn't built to beg, and as my useless arm has kept me from getting work——"

The inquisitive look faded from his birdlike eyes as the old man's head ceased to be cocked suspiciously. Again the eyes lost their birdlike quality, and a film spread over them: a film that became a mist when I touched my useless arm.

"Poor boy," he muttered. "Nolly was so——"

Again he seemed looking through me and beyond.

"You will find Nolly's civilian clothes in the highboy with the griffin's claws for legs —or is it handles to the drawers? You won't want the things in the chiffonier. They're all khaki. Shirts and ties and aviator's helmets, and other knitted things. They will fit you, I know. It will be nice to have some one about again to call 'Nolly' and to talk about Hollyhock."

Horace, pale enough, but composed, again took a hand.

"You can't mean this man is to wear Nolly's things, have Nolly's room!"

The old man nodded, his eyes closed, as though considering something important and one at which he was not to be disturbed.

Now, as his great-grandfather had said, Horace was not clever. His thwarted maliciousness could not refrain from a comment, my first clew to a final understanding of the mystery.

"Are you sure you won't be altering *that* in his favor before you're a week older? If so, it's a waste of time going on with it."

The old man reached out one of his ivory-yellow claws for what, from where I stood, I could see was a holographic will, not long: a page and a half, no more

"Here, look at this—Nolly."

The old man's eyes held mine.

"We must not blame Horace because he, too, has conscientious objections against war. But since Nolly died out there, I have conscientious objections against conscientious objectors. Anyhow, Nolly claimed my wealth wasn't mine, but given to me as one better fit to hold it in trust for the people than they were themselves. Which may be why it was sent when I was old in wisdom. . . . Nolly meant to make a model town out of Hollyhock. Our factories are there now, but for all that he had a scheme to turn it back into the sweet-smelling town of *my* boyhood. The town looked like a hollyhock then, when one swung into view around the last curve of the old Post Road, a big red heart—it was all red brick—against lots and lots of green leaves—it was high up on the greenest hill you ever saw. And it smelled hollyhock because there were hollyhocks everywhere"

The old man closed his eyes

"So I'm tearing out all that's black and

begrimed, and with that smoke-consuming device to be installed and the high hedges hiding everything ugly like shop fronts and garages and so forth, and the rest of it red brick and Elizabethan black and white—beam and timber don't they call it? You shall breakfast with me, Nolly, and hear more of it. There's work here for one like you. For I do believe," added the old man earnestly, "that God sent you here to-night."

I stared. It was indeed a night of surprises. And, think of it, it had only just begun.

"Perhaps, Nolly," the old man continued in the same earnest strain, "perhaps you will believe in God, too, when you read the name I was about to sign there when your brick intruded—for one sees that your misfortunes have lost you your faith now. The contemporary press has had much to say concerning my sudden accession to fortune at the age of eighty-eight. Look—while I sign."

I had forgotten I held the holograph will. I replaced it on the invalid's table attached to the arm of the wheeled chair, where stood a cork pig into which a number of gayly colored quills were thrust. The old man picked up one, an old gray goose's, dyed peacock blue, and signed a name that caused me to straighten up and pass my hands over my eyes like a man in a dream.

"Horace van Hollyhock, 1st" So this was the one upon whom some latter-day jinni had played the sort of trick for which his brother jinni had been famous in Al Raschid's day. On the last parcel of ground belonging to an ancient and impoverished Knickerbocker estate, nitrate had been discovered just when it was needed most—when the Great War began—and like Aladdin's palace in speed, if not in beauty, great mills had gone up overnight, almost, and a somnolent village became a municipality. All since nineteen-fourteen.

So *that* was Hollyhock? And the old man was Horace van Hollyhock, the first; General van Hollyhock of Civil and first Mexican War fame.

I affixed my signature silently. Horace, as the other witness, was doing the same, bending his back from where he stood behind his uncle, when some intuitive impulse within me suddenly seemed to correlate this present position of his with that of my brick that still lay on the floor, not far distant. But I was as yet not sufficiently master of my own wits to understand what this correlation of the two might mean; consciously, anyhow.

There the brick lay, and I am glad I looked, for the place where it had fallen gave me a clinching argument in support of my new theory when the time came to formulate one.

Perhaps the same sort of intuitive impulse caused the great-grandfather to give me the precious piece of parchment, grinning maliciously at Horace as he did so.

"If you give me your word to keep this safe and return it to me in person, Horace will be unable to persuade you I am insane and get you out of the house before breakfast to-morrow. Anyhow, Nolly, as you can see, it is not to Horace's interest that this will should be filed, and, were I to go West to-night, as men of my age are apt to do at any moment, what would the word of a homeless wanderer witness count against the sole heir of the estate if the will wasn't to be found?"

Suddenly he ceased to speak, sat holding his clawlike hand to his ear, the film again closing down over his eyes.

"I have an idea that the other Oliver knows as much about all this as we do. Well, he can rest now, poor Nolly. You would laugh at that, Horace, if you dared, wouldn't you? But how can you know what Hollyhock meant to Nolly—what it meant that he was to be allowed to make things beautiful for so many poor people who did not know how to, themselves, even had they the money he was to spend on them? How could he have rested until he had some one here to take his place? And who could be better than this other Nolly who made himself a prodigal son without a feast because he fought for the freedom of those he did not know? And now, Nolly, you can rest; rest well, Nolly."

He did not mean me, the Nolly who stood there, I am sure, but that other one he confidently believed to be about, somewhere. Nor did the mystical fade from his face at any time while he was being wheeled upstairs. When he bade me sleep well, one might have thought he was still addressing his dead grandson.

I did not leave him, however, until I had helped him out of his clothes, none of the servants returning, Horace standing by, scowling the while. And no wonder, for the paper I removed from my outer to my inner

pocket as we stood outside his great-grandsire's door deprived him of his enviable position of sole heir to the Van Hollyhock millions; leaving him what must have seemed to him, compared to the entire amount, no more than a beggarly pittance—although to me it sounded like a good-sized fortune in itself. He would never want for any luxury, certainly, so long as he kept it safe.

As I put the document in my pocket, the great-grandfather's clock in the hall below struck the hour of nine.

Immediately, Horace turned on me eyes like those of a hungry, desperate wolf at bay.

THE THIRD HOUR.

How Horace Plotted with the Men from the Ochre Ogre.

I.

FOUR QUEER CALLERS.

The sound of the clock striking seemed to have returned Horace to the state in which I had first encountered him: that of the desperate hunted animal. He controlled himself with the greatest difficulty and, turning to me, said:

"Come downstairs for a moment, if you please."

I had wheeled up old General van Hollyhock by one of the rear stairways. Evidently, it was originally intended for servants; but it had undergone great structural changes since that. While they were ordinary stairs to the stranger's eye, the pressing of a button released one set of steel springs which held them high, while another set flattened them out into a runway with little foot holds every few feet, so that Horace First's chair could be wheeled up without difficulty. Especially as the pressing of a third button resolved the runway into a moving stairway, so that, if the wheeler wished, he had only to push the chair past the first foothold and stand still, holding himself hard against it, to have both arrive without further exertion.

We did not descend by it, however, for old General van Hollyhock having the entire second-story front to himself, we stood by the front stairway on leaving him. Horace beckoned me to follow him down the great curving sweep of it, and a moment later we were in the library.

My first action on reaching it was to toss Horace's sheaf of bills on the table. His was to swing out a concealed cellarette and mix himself a stiff grog, which he drank off instanter and made another. Not until he faced me with this did he see the money I had flung down.

"What's—what's this?" he stammered. "You don't mean to say you're really going to *stay* here! Why, it's impossible."

"It's no more impossible than possible," I retorted calmly. "And you may as well get the notion out of your head that I meant assault or robbery when I threw that brick. I told your grandfather the truth: I did it to get sent to jail. Didn't I keep asking you to send for the police?" And so forth and so on explaining that I understood his theory but that he was altogether wrong.

It took him quite a while to grasp the fact that I *was* telling the truth. When he did, madness overtook him.

"To think," he went on, his voice rising to a great wail, "that I brought this all on myself. I had only to remain indoors and ignore your brick, or else to telephone the police and you wouldn't be here, another one to worry the very soul out of my body. And with those others coming at nine. Oh, God! and to think he saw nothing, absolutely nothing. It was all my damned imagination."

"Or guilty conscience," I ventured.

"Oh, God! I don't know whether he knows or not," he cried out in what was undoubtedly anguish. "Look here: what will you take to go away? I've got to raise five thousand anyhow. It might as well be ten. Will you take that if I get it and clear out to-morrow?"

"Not I," I returned. "I'm careful about whom I take money from, Horace."

"Who and what on earth are you?" he demanded abjectly. "You might get the old man to swallow all that stuff about the war and yourself, but it don't go down with me. Are you one of 'Handy' Jim's crowd sent here to watch me? Tell me that!"

"I'm going to tell you not one single thing," I averred, rising. "Except that, since we're going to live in the same house, we may as well settle down to some agreement with one another. Whatever I saw or didn't see—although I own I'm anxious to know what you think I saw—you'll hear no more of it from me. It's as if it hadn't happened, so far as my bothering *you* about it. You do the same and don't bother me.

I'll attend to whatever the general wants me to do the best way I can and leave you alone. We can never be friends, but at least we can avoid any overt act that shows we are enemies. Agreed?"

"And let that will you have in your pocket be filed? Let myself be robbed for the sake of a lot of foreign scum and their dirty brats?"

"I don't see how you're going to prevent it," I answered frankly. "Now, if you'll show me my room, that will be all for to-night. I'll go to it, and go to bed."

It was at that moment that a shrill jangling of the bell from the back of the house set his nerves on edge again.

Suddenly he arose.

"Come on, I'll show you your room."

He made record time up the front flight. The bell jangled again.

"Can't you hurry?" he grated harshly. "Here!" And flinging open the third-floor front, with a: "There's your room," left me without further words.

Curiosity seizing me, I crossed the room, lightly lifted the window and saw below on the front steps four very queer-looking customers to call at such a house at this hour. When they had been admitted, I closed the window softly and sat down to think.

Why should he have tried to give me hundreds of dollars if he were not afraid of me? But he *was* afraid of me. Not of physical violence, but of something he thought I had seen.

That was it. I leaped to my feet and began pacing the room. He had been up to some trick or the other and the entrance of that brick had stopped him. His guilty conscience made him think I had seen him at it—whatever it was—and he had tried to bribe me not to tell the old general.

What was it?

I paced the room in my perplexity time and time again, but got no solution. Certainly he was up to no good or he would not have parted with so much money. One had only to look at him to see that he was no philanthropist.

Suddenly I sat down again, overwhelmed by a terrible thought I dared not utter even to myself.

The old man had been making a will disinheriting Horace. He had been about to sign it when my brick came crashing through. Had it hit him I could easily have understood why Horace had paid me; even though the amount was double or treble what it was.

But it had *not* hit old General van Hollyhock. He remained just what he had been before the brick's triumphal entrance.

What was it then?

A speedy answer to my question brought me to my feet with a muttered "No!" Horace would not dare! Yet certain of his glances directed toward me were murderous if I knew anything about such glances. Which I should, after two years or more at the Front.

After all, it did not take much daring to make away with so old a man—and from behind! But the aftermath? Discovery was sure, certain! And he, Horace, would have been the one to benefit before the new will in my pocket went into effect. He would therefore be the one to suffer at the hands of the law.

It was too much for me. I was about to abandon the problem, sighing, when another idea occurred; one that might throw some light on the mystery of Horace's conduct.

Who were these queer customers below? Why had he been at once so terrified yet so anxious to be rid of me? Were these the men for whom he had to "raise five thousand to-night, anyhow?" If so, why?

Before I had dared to lift the window and look out, I had turned out the lights. Since, then, I had been sitting in the dark and on the edge of the bed. I had just reached that stage in ratiocination above recorded when I heard what story-writers love to call "a stealthy step upon the stair."

My door was open just as Horace had left it, so I heard it plainly. Something like terror gripped me by the throat. If my last theory as to Horace's intentions was true, no mere stranger would be allowed to stand between him and a fortune. And here was I in possession of a document disinheriting him. No ordinary disinheritance either, but millions.

"Lord, Lord," I thought, "why didn't I lock the door?" With this damned document on me I might have known that fellow would have been up to something.

The footsteps continued to come on. I sat still, clutching the bed in natural fear.

How was Horace armed? For it was a certainty he had not come to measure his puny, pallid person against my stalwart, sun-tanned one, useless arm or no! Will-

ingly, had I the use of both arms, would I have tied one behind my back for the privilege of giving Horace the hiding of his young life.

Then I remembered the four queer-looking parties who had entered the house only recently. Even at the distance from which I had seen them, there was no mistaking at least two of them for undesirable citizens.

You can imagine how cheering this thought was to me, waiting there in the darkness with one useless arm and no weapon. There was one in the room, too: I had noticed it before I put out the light: a service automatic attached to a Sam Browne belt, evidently part of the other Nolly's equipment that his friends had sent home.

Too late to think of that now. It needed the light to find it, and I wasn't having any of that, not with some one creeping on me only a few feet away. No use providing him with a target and saving him at least the struggle I could put up in the dark.

The steps were at my door now. Although I was like a jack-in-box on steel springs imperfectly held down, I managed to substitute for my labored breathing the wholesome, hearty sound of a healthy man in a deep slumber.

Then, I could hardly believe my luck, the steps went on their way downstairs again without quite so much caution as before. I sat there keeping up the sounds that go with sleep lest there be a pair of them who had been lock-stepping at the same time, one of whom had remained at my door.

But, no! For when I ceased to breathe altogether, listening intently for the presence of another person and keeping it up until I must have gone purple in the dark, nothing in the way of near-by sounds resulted; only the far-away murmur of voices from below.

Suddenly I made up my mind to discover what Horace was up to. Then I got to the wall where the officer's accouterments hung. My hand fastened on the Sam Browne belt. Without waiting to fool with straps and buckle, I threw the whole weight over my shoulders and fastened it. Then I unbuttoned the holster and got out the gun and examined the cartridge clip. I needed no light for that: my fingers sufficed to tell me there remained only three of the original eight shots. Evidently it had been sent on by the other Nolly's friends exactly as it was when they found him with it in his hand.

I had a momentary picture of him—a picture as plain as if I was again back in the trenches crawling out to retrieve the dead, as I had done so many times as a Tommy.

So startling was my vision of the face that I began to believe the old general was right: that the spirit of the other Nolly was really somewhere about the house, guiding me to do what he would have done, especially to protect the old man he had loved and who had loved him. Somehow it heartened me. It never occurred to me to be afraid—that way!

"All right, Nolly, old man," I whispered, as if that was what he wanted me to say.

My fingers went searching about in the Sam Browne attachments for the things usually found there. They encountered the cartridges, and I filled the clip. Then they went in search of the trench flash we always carry and found that, too.

It did not occur to me to remove the Sam Browne belt now that I had it on: the feel of it across my shoulders was so natural after my two years of officerdom, of wearing one constantly. With flash light in one hand and automatic in the other, I set out to examine into the activities of Horace and his friends.

Softly descending the stairway, I passed the first landing and came finally to the lower hall. The door of the library was partly open, and the sound of voices was plain enough even from where I stood at the top of the stairs. But I must have a coign of more vantage than that unprotected spot.

Remembering that the library had a rear entrance, I made my way toward it as circumspectly as possible, keeping close to the stairway until I reached the old clock, then shifting suddenly to the other side of the hall.

The main hall extended to where the clock stood. A sort of secondary hall, or short passageway, opened on the other side of the clock between the door to the dining room that led to the back of the house and the rear door to the library. This ran across the house for the entire library width, its door facing the old clock being hung with more of the velvet curtains that hid it from view. So that when I crept on the other side of them, I was in a little inclosed space between draperies and doorway. Knowing there were more draperies on the

library side, so that the opened door would not show—and, anyhow, there was a high bureau desk directly in front of the dark draperies—I waited until I heard the confused sound of voices run high, then unlatched the door.

This done, it was not difficult to crouch in such a position that I could both see and hear.

There stood Horace, facing in my direction, his face again like that of a wolf at bay, and surrounding him in semicircle, their backs to me, their attitudes ominous and threatening, the four queer callers.

II.

THE MAN ON THE ROOF.

"Now, gentlemen," Horace was saying, "there's no use mincing matters with you. Here"—and he pulled from various pockets sheaf after sheaf of bank notes—"is two thousand five hundred dollars."

A hoarse growl of revolt issued from the two rougher members of the party.

"Which is all I could raise in so short a time, and that's all I can say about it," Horace hastened to add. "I expected to be able to get the remainder easily enough. My uncle was expected to die to-night with heart trouble. Being his sole heir, I could have had the money in a jiffy. But it was not to be. He—recovered."

He hurried on, one word jumping out after another, a hand behind him clutching at the curtains for support. For he stood as near the door as he could. From the look in his eyes as he surveyed the four picturesque cutthroats, he knew he might have to cut and run for it at any minute.

One of the men, who wore a romantic-looking soft hat, stilled the rising storm, holding up one hand for silence: a hand singularly soft and slim of fingers for one engaged on the errand this turned out to be. Their backs were still to me, so I saw only that he was rather fastidiously attired in well-cut gray flannels, their cut, and that of the suit of neat brown serge worn by the man in the cap next to him, in striking contrast to the big blue sweater worn by the third member of the party, a burly ruffian, and the ill-fitting frock coat and East Side politician's silk hat that one could scarcely say "adorned" the fourth member.

"How might you have had the money in a jiffy, may I ask, Mr. van Hollyhock?" asked the man in gray flannels, in the sort of cultivated accents one might expect to hear in some conservative club.

"In my uncle's safe upstairs in his bedroom he always keeps upward of five or six thousand for small personal philanthropies," answered Horace readily enough, too readily I thought. "If he were dead that money would have been mine along with everything else, and I could have had Handy Jim here open it. I know well enough," Horace added with a sour smile, "that he could do it. I was with him once when——"

"Yep; and you'll be remembering that time even better before you're many minutes older," growled the man addressed as Handy Jim, the one wearing the ill-fitting frock coat. "For we're gunna go to the old man right now with the story of what happened to you the night when I was kind enough to mess up the Harmon Winterson place and make murder look like burglary and——"

"Stop it!" cried Horace tensely. "Stop it, I say!"

"Stop—hell!" responded Handy Jim, jamming the ill-fitting silk hat down an inch or so upon his forehead, which brought it almost over his eyes. "You've had all the chance you're gunna git. If the old man's got dough in that there safe of his, he ain't gunna need me to open it to-night, young feller. He'll open it himself as fast as his fingers'll let him to keep his great-grandson from being locked up for murder."

"You couldn't do it," Horace would evidently have shrieked had he dared; as it was, his intense whisper was all sibilants. "You'd have to incriminate yourself. You'd——"

"State's-evidence immunity 'as been offered to whoever informs against the active party in that there deplorable affair." The big burly in the blue sweater growled. He turned as he spoke to look in a small pineapple roped mirror, removing with the greatest calmness an entire upper set of false teeth, the only white things about him. These he readjusted at what was evidently a more favorable angle and, smacking his lips, added: "Also one thousand *re*ward!" and began rubbing both hands together vigorously. "And well you know it, Mr. 'Orace van 'Olly'ock," he concluded.

How well Horace did know it was evident from the shaking forefinger he lifted to loosen a collar suddenly grown tight again.

"I tell you what," he said doggedly, "if you think he'll give you that to save me, you're jolly well mistaken. In the first place, he's old and cantankerous, and the minute you bring pressure to bear, he'll only damn you up and down and tell you to get out. In the second place, to show you how much he likes me, he made a new will to-night leaving me nothing but a beggarly fifteen thousand a year. In the third place, I opened up the subject of the—well—Harmon Winterson—affair——"

He paused, wry of face, to wet his dry lips.

"And he swore up and down, the person responsible ought to be hanged high as Haman. So what good will it do you to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs—me? When he hears you out, he'll tell you to go to the devil, turn me out with you, and very likely phone the police himself."

"Will he?" whispered the coffee-colored man softly, smiling his sweet but somehow sinister smile. He seemed to be feeling for something in his pocket to make sure it was there.

"Once we're in that room, don't doubt we'll walk out of it with whatever we want if that safe contains it, you can accept my assurance on that, Mr. van Hollyhock," said the man of the Conservative Club voice. Now that he, too, had turned, I saw that, besides being slim and dapper in his gray flannels, with shirt and soft collar to match, he had a trim Vandyke beard. Something about his appearance was elusively familiar to me—annoyingly so when at first I could not tell why.

"Wotever we do, time's money this bleeding night," asseverated the blue-sweatered person, snapping shut a lady's watch he wore on a black ribbon. "So, excuse me not being polite, but get the bloody 'ell out of the w'y and be bleeding quick about it. You 'eard me, didn't you?"

"Soh! Soh!" adjured the gray-flanneled person, his indolent smile indulgent, "remember there are gentlemen present. But, really, Mr. van Hollyhock, crudely as our friend Mr. Sims has expressed it, I do think he states the matter concisely. Where's the general's room?"

But still Horace did not budge.

"He won't give it to you, I tell you," he cried, dancing about in an agonized attempt to cover the entire curtained door space. "You'll have your trouble for nothing."

"We'll have five thousand dollars to-night before we leave this house," stated the Conservative Club voice, so convincingly that I think Horace realized the matter had gone beyond mere threats: certainly I realized it had. "More if possible, but five thousand we *will* have——"

"We *must* have," said the coffee-colored person, his voice vibrant with eagerness.

"You're bloody well right, we must," growled he of the blue sweater, clenching and unclenching a pair of mahogany hands.

"Or somebody'll suffer," stated Handy Jim succintly.

It was then the great idea must have come to Horace. He caught at the arms of the gray-flanneled person who wore the Vandyke beard and had the Conservative Club voice, and was evidently the leader of the party.

"Listen," said Horace, "do you want to know how you can get your money and a lot more, too?"

"You'll have to hurry," said the other, shaking him off. "I give you just ten minutes."

As he looked at his wrist watch, the great-grandfather's clock in the hallway chimed the half hour.

"Before you start," he added, "you had better realize why we *must* have that five thousand and before eleven o'clock to-night. Don't make the mistake of thinking any one of us here are common or garden crooks. Except Handy Jim here, that is who used to be, as you have good reason to remember. We belong to a party that represents the down-trodden proletariat; a party that is the natural enemy of all people like you and yours who live by the sweat of other people's brows. 'Tis a party that has been heard from in Russia where it has given a good account of itself. It means to be heard from in this country, too, and there never was such a night as this for a demonstration of its power right here in New York. I have ten thousand men at my beck and call, but neither arms nor ammunition to speak of."

As he paused, flicking negligently at his nose with a gray silk handkerchief, I recognized him at last. In a queer so-called square near by hung a creaking sign with a bilious sunset for background against which was painted a peculiarly unattractive person in skins leaning upon a big knotted bludgeon; the whole affair captioned "The

Ochre Ogre." Below it, in the basement of a one-time brownstone residence, was one of those cafés—restaurants—brasseries—whatever you call them—peculiar to Greenwich Village, some of whose inhabitants fondly imagine they are like those of the Paris Latin Quarter: "Pink Pups," "Purple Parrotts," and their like.

At any rate, they spring up overnight like toadstools, and vanish in the same way. That one most popular among so-called radicals when I reached New York a month or so ago was the "Ochre Ogre" I have mentioned, and here this man had been pointed out to me as Oliphant Orme, Rhodes Scholar, once at Heidelberg, and now editor of an I. W. W. weekly who had got himself into jail over certain comments he had published about "a capitalist war."

Now that I remembered that, I recalled that the coffee-colored man had been sitting with him at the time and that my informant had referred to him as "Hassan Niljuddah," a "radical writer," and an Armenian.

"So *he* says, anyhow," was my informant's further word, "but I believe he's a German propagandist, myself—if you ask me."

The discovery of their identities at the present time did much to enlighten me as to the meaning of Oliphant Orme's information which he continued to dispense lavishly to the alarmed Horace.

"Plenty of men, but no arms or ammunition, d'you see, Mr. van Hollyhock. But at a certain East River slip, there is a barge loaded down with both, intended for the American soldiers who are being shipped to Siberia to quench the first flames of real freedom the world has ever seen. We intend to turn these weapons against the autocrats who saw to it that they were sent. When we are through with them, they will wish they had not been so ready to send their mercenaries against poor bleeding Russia. But *free* Russia: 'Holy' Russia at last."

"You are not on an East Side rostrum, comrades," whispered the Armenian, smiling softly as before. "Briefly, Mr. van Hollyhock, those weapons, that ammunition, can be procured by us if we pay the watchman on the pier five thousand dollars before eleven o'clock. If not, it will be shipped across to Hoboken. At half after or thereabouts, when a tug will come for it. If we attempt force, the watchman will set off the burglar alarms. He's a comrade, too, and a devoted one, but, as he says, the country will be too hot to hold him after letting us take those arms and munitions, and, as he puts it truly, he and his family must live. So you see how important that five thousand is, and why we *must* have it."

"And when will there ever be such a night agyne, with everybody in the bleedin' streets, and the coppers told not to mind abaout the bloody laws, let 'em celebrate. When will we ever 'ave the chanst to git together the way we kin to-night, open up ary 'ouse we got a mind to, tyke any capitalist we want out and bloody well 'ang the bleeder to the nearest lamp-post, and shoot 'is 'ouse up and sack it and——"

"Moderate your enthusiasm, Comrade Solomon," smiled Orme. "We waste time, Mr. van Hollyhock. Unless you have some way of getting that five thousand, stand out of the way, or we'll have to start on you at——"

"But I have," interrupted Horace intensely. "Listen, listen: You shall have far more than five thousand. Take whatever is in the safe upstairs, and if you come back to-morrow you shall each have that much more. If only——"

I saw him lean across, smiling as ugly a smile as ever I saw and whisper in Orme's ear. Whereupon Orme smiled, too, as did the coffee-colored Hassan, softly, sweetly, yet in so sinister a fashion that I shivered and began speedy preparations for withdrawing from my post of danger.

I left the shelter of the curtains, opened the dining-room door, and was about to flee the house by the back way when suddenly I paused. It was as if once again I saw that same vision of No Man's Land, that of the other Nolly, that I had seen in my namesake's room, above. As I hesitated there in the gloom of the lofty dining room, I was in such a position that I saw a shadowy figure creep around the curve and vanish on the upper sweep of stairway.

Immediately, I made up my mind. They should not murder that defenseless old man while I was in the house. And so I gave chase. Not by the front stairway, but by the back. Reaching the first floor, however, and not finding the old gentleman's door beleaguered when I peered out of hiding, I pursued my way up the next flight to my own landing. Here I reconnoitered a bit, gun in hand, but still finding no one and hearing sounds above, sought the attic floor

where the moonlight streamed through an open trapdoor showing a ladder to the roof. This I mounted silently until I reached the step that would bring my head in view of any one on the roof.

If every one's experiences in trench-fighting serve them as well as mine served me that night, people will soon believe such experiences an indispensable part of a well-rounded education. Any one who has seen nearly three years' active service—one as a Tommy, too—becomes an expert in looking up and over without revealing his presence to enemies on the other side.

But when my eye was at the proper angle of observation to observe the long lane of roofs in a silver wash of moonlight, I saw that my caution had been actually unnecessary. For the man I was after was kneeling with his back to me.

He was cutting the telephone wires!

TO BE CONCLUDED.

OUR NEW WORDS AND PHRASES

NEW words, as well as phrases expressing much in few words are constantly being adopted as part of our language. The war and the experiences, grotesque or dreadful, of our soldiers, with new situations developing as a result, are responsible for many new expressions and words most of which are destined to be permanently part of our language. These include such words and expressions as "doughboy." "over the top," "blimp"—applied to a form of dirigible balloon—and various army slogans and new idioms. People are already beginning to use some of them in describing everyday happenings at home. An officer of the Aërial Touring Association in describing his first aëroplane ascent, suggested that as a tenderfoot is one not yet hardened to life on the plains, so a person not yet hardened to floating in the air must be a tenderwing, and predicts that this word will soon be in general use.

Most of the words in this way added to our language originated in odd incidents or observances or peculiarities of pronunciation. The word "teetotaller" originated in England a long time ago when a well-known advocate of total abstinence, who stammered badly, said in reply to a question by a committee on temperance:

"Wh-what we wa-want is tee-tee-total ab-ab-stinence."

The expression "kicked the bucket," used some time ago as a flippant way of saying a person died, dates back several centuries ago to one Belzober, who committed suicide in a cellar by hanging himself from a beam. He stood on an inverted bucket while he attached one end of a rope to a beam and kicked the bucket away, after putting the noose around his neck.

The complaint "I'm the goat," meaning blamed for the misdoings of others, comes from an old ceremony of the ancient Israelites, by which, once a year, at the tabernacle, after the people confessed their sins, the high priest placed his hands on a goat called the scapegoat; metaphorically transferring their sins to the goat. The goat was then released.

The word "boycott" originated in Ireland in 1880, when the Land League was very powerful there. The house of Captain Boycott, a rich and unpopular landowner was surrounded by land leaguers, who prevented any one from leaving or bringing food to the house. One servant managed to pass the cordon to an adjoining village, but was captured on his return. All he carried was a vial of castor oil for a sick member of the Boycott family. The land leaguers forced him to drink the castor oil himself and sent him back to the Boycott residence.

The first use of the letters "O. K." on invoices and other documents after checking, is generally ascribed to President Jackson, who used them facetiously as the initials of "Oll Korrect," on a document.

These new words and phrases, expressing much in little are continually added to our language, finding their way ultimately to our dictionaries and encyclopedias.

The Net Result

ANOTHER STORY OF THE AMERICAN NAVY ABROAD

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "The Orphan and the Battle Wagon," Etc.

"THIS here war is no place for a nervous man," casually remarked a large, melancholy bluejacket who tottered under the weight of another sandbag.

"You said something. There's times when you're almost lucid," replied a runt of a boatswain's mate as he halted to shift his own burden and incidentally to wipe his nose. "It don't quite fit in with my notions of a sailor-man's job, but ours not to wonder why, as the poet observed. Unless you want to get blown clean off the map tonight, you big loafer, my advice is to put your back into it and shove her along."

They trudged onward to join their comrades who carried planks and rusted plates of sheet iron as well as sandbags, while other squads sweated with shovel and mattock. The winter rain pelted and drenched them, whipped by a gale which lashed the shallow harbor of Dunkirk into muddy froth and compelled the brave little trawlers to forsake their task of mine-sweeping and come rolling in for shelter. Between the basins where the vessels were moored against the walls of masonry there was a small area of wharfage now tenanted by several shacks and barracks of rough lumber above which snapped a frayed ensign—the Stars and Stripes.

What chiefly interested the toiling draft of a hundred and fifty men from the American navy was the completion of a bomb-proof refuge spacious enough to contain all hands. Just why the higher powers should have elected to establish a seaplane base in this forlorn and battered port of the French coast was beyond their understanding, but they felt a lively regard for the safety of their own skins and therefore they were digging themselves in with the most earnest zeal. The lieutenant in command, spattered with mud from his rubber boots to the disreputable blouse, showed them how to cover the roof with four feet of sand and a final layer of boiler plate. He was an energetic young man, incurably cheerful, who seemed not in the least dismayed at the prospect of being bombed from the air almost every night.

By way of courtesy, a captain of the British naval air service from the vast station a little way inland had called to offer his services, commenting in a manner bland and debonair:

"But this is a beastly place to set up shop, my dear Lieutenant Bevans, down here among the docks. You will be bombed out of it inside thirty days. The French tried it, don't you know—a seaplane station right in this same spot, and they were jolly well mopped up and had to chuck it. The boche air squadrons follow the coast line and they can find the docks even in a dark night."

"Thanks for the advice, sir," replied Lieutenant "Chuck" Bevans, with that engaging grin of his, "but I'll have to play the cards as they lie. Do you care to look at our dugout? We flatter ourselves that it is quite the latest thing. The French admiral approves and he ought to know, for he has been living underground in Dunkirk for three years on end."

The British captain gravely inspected the armored mound and crawled into the damp, gloomy cavern. Then he visited the rough sheds in which the American sailors were quartered and glanced at the huge tent which covered a few obsolete seaplanes borrowed from the French. He lingered to chat in the small room where the lieutenant lived, or rather camped, with a stove and a cot, while the rain beat in through the seaward wall. From a window they could discern, dim and sad in the shrouding weather, the shattered outlines of the buildings which marched along the harbor side of Dunkirk—roofless, tortured, here and

there a gap that marked obliteration. They indicated the suffering of a city which had incessantly endured bombardment, from the air and from the land, whose spirit was unbroken, whose people proudly defied the enemy. In the foreground, alongside a stone quay, towered two of the British monitors, uncouth, enormous, whose business it was to hurl fifteen-inch shells into Ostend and Zebrugge. The captain of the British naval air service glanced at the wisp of white ensign that flew from the stern of a monitor and nodded to the American lieutenant, with one of his rare smiles.

"That is the answer, Bevans—why you chaps are here, what? To show that we stand together, the lot of us, until the war is won?"

"I think that is why we Yanks were dumped into Dunkirk, sir," answered Chuck Bevans. "The French seemed pleased about it, and so do your people."

"Good luck to you, and don't forget to leg it into that swagger dugout of yours when you hear the alarm signal."

The captain motored back to the château where he lived with his staff and his servants, and from which he directed the operations of scores of fighting planes and an army comprising five thousand airmen and mechanics. At dinner he was even less loquacious than usual, but at length he looked up to say to his personal aid:

"I did my duty and warned the American naval chap. Of course, if he has to put a base in Dunkirk, there is no other place where his seaplanes can take off, but, my word, it's plain suicide."

"What has he got for equipment? Crude, I fancy," asked the other.

"Rather. No machines of their own, three or four dud French buses that will drown their crews, a few huts to live in, a couple of ensigns as the flying force."

"Not much to brag about," replied the aid. "The American navy had better pull up its socks."

"Ah, but you miss the point," exclaimed the captain. "We have had three years to build up our air service. And we were pretty rotten at the first of it. These Yanks didn't wait to get their stuff turned out. They jumped ashore at Dunkirk with what they had, as an evidence of good faith. It bucked me up a lot, just to look 'em over. Here's hoping they dodge the bombs until they get a run for their money."

A few nights after this, Lieutenant Chuck Bevans, his two ensigns, and his hundred and fifty bluejackets tumbled out when the sirens shrieked, and scrambled into their cavern while the boche planes droned overhead and let fall the wicked projectiles that exploded with terrifying concussions and great flashes of flame. Although aimed at the docks and the shipping, most of them went wide of the mark, smashing through dwelling houses or tearing holes in the pavement. A British cargo steamer was demolished no more than a hundred yards from the American naval base and another bomb glanced from the sloping roof of the dugout.

There followed a week of clear weather with light winds during which the enemy squadrons visited Dunkirk every night, unloading their infernal freightage with more enthusiasm than accuracy, but managing to slay many women and children in the town, blowing the stern off an anchored French destroyer, and making life most unhappy for the Yankee sailormen. One barracks building was splintered and a chasm of a hole marked the site of the shack in which the lieutenant had lived the simple life. He began to wonder about that thirty-day limit. There might be something in the prediction. The loss of sleep was also trying to the nerves. A man couldn't keep it up indefinitely, working hard all day and crowding into a filthy dugout after dark, while the cursed tumult sounded as though the world was tumbling about his ears.

The two ensigns were impatient and displayed irritation. This preliminary program was stupid. The lieutenant was awaiting the arrival of additional aviators before beginning the regular patrol against the German submarines in the Channel. Meanwhile, the routine comprised a great deal of drudgery and no retaliation. The unhappy brace of ensigns were permitted to undertake practice flights in a French seaplane by way of learning how to rise from the narrow lane of water between the docks, a hazardous performance which risked an unholy crash at every attempt. Enviously, they watched the British naval airmen soar far out to sea in their little fighting machines or heard their yarns of U-boats detected and reported to the surface fleets of destroyers, trawlers, and drifters which hastened to administer the deadly depth-bomb in a warfare that gave no quarter.

"What do you say to suggesting it to Bevans?" said Ensign Robert Carnahan, hopefully addressing his partner. "It isn't as if we were green at the game. We had a solid year's training at home before we came to France, and I'll bet we can fly with any of these birds on patrol duty."

"He says he needs us ashore," was the gloomy reply, "and he is none too keen about drowning us until he gets more help."

"But if we stick around this dump much longer, Bob, we'll never get action. The darned old boche mighty near scuppered the outfit last night. Man, he fairly ringed us with bombs. He is liable to score a touchdown before we beat it into the dugout one of these fine evenings and there won't be enough left of two promising young aviators to make a funeral. I am certainly fed up with Dunkirk."

"You're on, Al. We'll put it up to Bevans at supper. One little war flight and we promise to be good."

The weary lieutenant, who was a regular navy man, inured to thankless duties and rigid discipline, knew what was in the minds of these boyish reserve ensigns. To them the war was a sporting adventure. "Bob" Carnahan had been a football player of campus renown and "Al" Chew had pitched illustriously for the nine of another university. All they yearned for now was an opportunity to prove themselves, to gain a brief and glorious respite from the routine of the day's work. Lieutenant Chuck Bevans, condemned to serve as a head carpenter, mechanic, and task master, smiled tolerantly as he observed the ensigns nudge each other and whisper at the supper table.

"How did the old boat tune up to-day?" he inquired.

"Smooth as a Swiss watch," Carnahan eagerly assured him. "Plenty of pep, and a child could have handled her."

"Some ship," put in Ensign Chew. "She did ninety knots and was just jogging."

"What about machine-gun practice?" pursued the lieutenant.

"We are really good, sir," modestly answered Bob Carnahan. "If we are ever lucky enough to meet a German plane, I'll bet we can shoot the eyebrows off the Fritzies."

"I presume you are a hundred per cent plus at bombing submarines," amiably observed their commander.

"Well, we let go four dummies to-day," came from Ensign Alfred Chew, "and every one of 'em would have put a hole through your hat."

"You *are* a couple of shrinking violets. It's all wasted, though, for I have made up my mind to——"

"To turn down our request," mourned Ensign Carnahan.

"We thought you might let us give Fritz one good dusting," echoed Ensign Chew.

"Stow the gab and listen, you infantile simps," rudely exclaimed Lieutenant Bevans. "I made up my mind to-day to give you a war flight. I expect to phone the British station to-night and arrange for a specified patrol area. You will be ready to flop at daylight, and the Lord have mercy on your souls."

The ensigns beamed and decorously refrained from cheering. They decided to turn in early and garner all the sleep possible, hoping the boche planes might take a night off, but a visitor appeared in the person of a French ace on leave in Dunkirk. He was a sallow, low-spirited young man in spite of the honors emblazoned on his tunic, palms, and stars, crosses, medals, and ribbons in incredible profusion. The conversation stumbled because he spoke no English, but it was obvious that he regarded the war flight of the bold ensigns with a tinge of pessimism.

Their machine? He knew the type well. For active service it required aviators of profound experience. In the hands of beginners, alas, there had been many fatalities along the French coast. Flying far out over the sea was a serious matter—here the resplendent ace shrugged a shoulder and his gesture was sinister. If only the Americans could wait for their own seaplanes with which they were so much more familiar! Ceremoniously he wished them good fortune, although plainly expecting the worst, and stalked out into the gloom.

"A merry wight, that," murmured Ensign Carnahan as he smothered a yawn. "He will be all upset if we come back alive. I hate to disappoint him."

"He had to begin, didn't he, Bob? These wise birds have been at it so long that they can't remember anything else."

The weather next morning was uncommonly kind, a bright sky with a light breeze which dispelled the Channel mist. The French trawlers were plodding seaward to sweep their appointed routes and a division

of British destroyers fled from the harbor on some mysterious errand of their own. Lieutenant Bevans inspected the seaplane with the most scrupulous care before he ordered the waiting squad of bluejackets to lower it from the slip-way into the basin. It was, in fact, a flying boat, with a whaleback hull and a wing spread of eighty feet.

Ensign Carnahan crawled into the pilot's seat forward and Al Chew tucked himself into the cockpit aft where he acted as observer and manipulated the machine gun. Upon a chart were laid out their courses and bearings for the patrol tour, and they had rejoiced to find that they were to swing toward the Belgian coast where there was always the chance of encountering a boche plane or two on scouting duty. Sternly, Lieutenant Bevans informed them that they were not to go surging off in search of trouble. Air combats were not their particular job. They were, first of all, to patrol for enemy submarines and help safeguard the lanes of merchant traffic. The ensigns blithely promised obedience and then the roar of the propellor cut short the farewalls.

The graceful machine skittered over the surface of the water, flinging clouds of spray, swiftly gathered flying speed, and rose clear, climbing a thousand feet before it swerved to the northward. The engine sang powerfully without miss or falter. The two ensigns were buoyantly happy. No more than a few minutes had passed when they were able to descry the flat shore of Belgium, scarcely distinguishable from the sea, and the hazy mass of buildings and tall chimneys identified as Ostend. Mere specks against the sky two planes hovered above the enslaved city from whose harbor the German submarines crept out on their infamous business. Reluctantly, Bob Carnahan steered wide to sweep farther away from the coast, toward the middle of Dover Strait. Bombing Ostend was the job of the squadrons of huge Handley-Page machines from the British station at Dunkirk, and they attended to it exceedingly well.

Keen-eyed, vigilant, the two ensigns scrutinized the sea which unrolled far beneath them like a brown carpet flecked with little flashes of foam, for once unvexed by boisterous winds. Crowded transports and grimy cargo boats were traversing the highway between England and France, moving in safety because the naval power of Germany was impotent to thwart them. Toy-like, the fleets of drifters and destroyers steamed restlessly to and fro on the surface patrol. The ambushed U-boats, however, appeared to be engaged elsewhere, for there was never the glint of a periscope with the telltale furrow spreading in its wake, or the glimpse of a conning tower as it broke water.

An empty quest for the American air patrol, but such was the fortune of war, and one could not reasonably hope to bag a submarine every day. Before the eager ensigns realized it, they had been in the air three hours and would soon have to be winging it back to port. The breeze was a trifle stronger, they noticed, and the sky had become overcast. This winter weather was apt to be treacherous. Carnahan eyed the sodden cloud banks which were massing swiftly and a gust brought a spatter of rain. He turned to wave a hand at his comrade in the rear cockpit and Ensign Chew nodded assent. Another gale might be brewing in the Channel and the rain and mist were apt to close down like a curtain.

Soon after the course was laid for Dunkirk the coast became invisible, obscured in gray vapor, and Carnahan studied his compass with some slight uneasiness. Rapidly the task of holding the flying boat true to the proper bearings became more difficult. The wind had shifted so that it caught the sensitive craft on the beam instead of ahead and she drifted away to leeward while the hull swayed and plunged to the lift and swoop of the wide wings. To ease the strain the pilot was compelled to steer dead into the wind whenever the sudden flurries whistled through the struts with a menacing note. Instead of holding a bee line for Dunkirk, the laboring craft was blown toward the wider reaches of the Channel and the sense of direction was confused now that the landmarks were invisible.

The engine had behaved well until now, but the excessive vibration seemed to portend trouble. The boat was not new, and this ordeal of rough weather was testing every part to the uttermost. Carnahan was warned by the irregular pulsation of the motor, the break in the rhythm, and a perceptible loss of power. He could not leave his station, but Ensign Chew, also suspecting a mishap, was desperately attempting to investigate the engine while he hung on by his eyelids and displayed the agility of an acrobat. Presently the mechanical mal-

ady revealed alarming symptoms. The motor almost died and picked up again with a languid flutter. The craft coasted toward the sea in a long slant, recovered itself, flew on an even keel for a short distance, and again dipped downward.

Near at hand the water was seen to be perilously rough. There was no choice, however, and after a final struggle to climb clear, the unlucky cruiser, no longer a flying boat, poked her blunt nose into a white-crested wave and tried to submerge entirely. The next sea swashed over the hull, half-filling it. The shock of the first impact was so violent that the two ensigns were pitched forward and, while they groped to recover themselves, the salt water almost strangled them. Surprised at finding the old boat still intact and afloat, they sputtered and swore and bailed furiously with canvas buckets. The boat was making a gallant battle for survival, breasting the waves more stanchly than the castaways had dared to hope. The motion was wild and dizzy, one wing dipping under while the other reared skyward, and the spray broke in sheets over the plunging hull, but the fragile structure somehow held together and refused to fill and founder.

Ensign Alfred Chew crawled forward, shook the water from helmet and goggles, and shouted in his shipmate's ear:

"Are we down-hearted? It was the gasoline feed pipe cracked and then jarred off close to the pump. A clean break, and there's no mending it. You can't tape it. And pitching about on our heads this way we can't get the bally thing apart."

"Right you are, Al. And never a vessel in sight to pick us up. The place was alive with 'em a little while ago. Better get a pigeon started right away."

The boat lacked wireless equipment, but the two precious pigeons, although sadly bedraggled, had escaped drowning, and Ensign Chew extracted one from the small box and warmed and caressed it while Carnahan scribbled the message for help and slipped it into the aluminum cartridge which they clasped on the bird's leg. It fluttered in a dazed manner when released, hovered over the drifting machine, flew in a zigzag course for a minute or two and then sped in the direction of Dunkirk.

"We'll let the other one go in an hour or so if we are still messing about here," said Carnahan. "Fish out the thermos bottle and the sandwiches, Al. In this thick weather we are liable to be hard to find."

They ate and drank with frugal care, reserving part of the emergency ration. Huddled together in the forward cockpit they began sending up distress signals, using green Very lights which, in clear weather, might have been visible for several miles. In this gray smother of mist and rain and spindrift, however, such signals were pitifully futile. The boat was wrenched and twisted by the immense leverage of the wings which yawed and tripped in an insane see-saw. It seemed as though they must be torn from the hull, leaving it to capsize. There was neither sight nor sound of shipping, and the steady pressure of the wind was carrying them down the Channel.

"That French ace with the chronic grouch didn't guess so far wrong," admitted Ensign Chew between his chattering teeth. "He was a Jonah. I didn't like his make-up."

"Aces?" exclaimed Carnahan with a feeble grin. "We are the original pair of two-spots. That dugout of ours looks like a cozy corner to me."

Talk was infrequent for some time after this. Shivering, benumbed, they bailed the cockpit at intervals and stared into the gloomy weather, silently wondering how long they could hope to live through such a tragic ordeal as this. They were navy men but with little experience afloat, and the wretched motion of their derelict craft afflicted them with seasickness. They were unspeakably miserable, too much so to be frightened.

The day wore on to noon. There was a bit of comfort in the fact that seas grew no worse, while the wind had sensibly diminished and the sky was less somber. Survivors of torpedoed merchant ships had suffered worse things in open boats, no doubt, or washed about on rafts for days, and this occurred to the two ensigns. They had no idea of whimpering, but were grimly hanging on, and it was all in the day's work. If the pigeons had reached Dunkirk a vessel must have been sent out in haste, but nothing was seen of it.

"We have properly lost ourselves," said Carnahan, "and if we are picked up it will be a matter of sheer luck."

"A chilly proposition, if we have to make a night of it," replied young Chew.

The wind dropped to a harmless breeze

and the sea was almost tranquil, but the wrecked seaplane floated soggily and the hull leaked like a basket. Carnahan was trying to calk a crack with strips of canvas and a pocketknife when his comrade clutched him by the arm and hoarsely implored him to look astern. Spellbound they gazed and their mouths hung open. Ensign Alfred Chew rubbed his eyes and muttered strong language. Bob Carnahan clenched his fists and could find no words to fit his impassioned emotions.

Moving very slowly and protruding no more than two feet above the surface, a bit of metal pipe left a ripple in its wake. The upper end of it was an elbow into which was fitted a lens, and the glitter of this glass disk suggested the living eye of some very formidable sea monster. It inspected the drifting seaplane and the forlorn passengers with a scrutiny deliberate and leisurely, with a cold-blooded, impersonal detachment, pausing when abreast of the American flag which was painted on the yellow hull of the flying boat.

"You were so darned anxious to find a periscope, Bob," muttered Ensign Chew. "There it is, all right. What are you going to do with it?"

"Fritz is giving us the once-over, Al, old man. That can't be one of our own submarines or it would come up and hail us and show a little human interest. An interesting situation, isn't it?"

"You put it mildly. It is almost sensational. What's the idea? Will the swine stand by for the pleasure of seeing us drown, or will he ram our boat and finish the job at once?"

"You have another guess or two. He may pop up alongside and snatch us aboard as prisoners."

"I hadn't thought of that," dolefully replied the other ensign. "A couple of American naval officers might be considered good hunting. That doesn't appeal to me, Bob. This surrender stuff isn't taught in our service, not while your ship is afloat and under your feet."

"Here we are, with a pair of perfectly good hundred-pound bombs still hitched to our old scow and we can't drop 'em on Fritz," was Al's lament. "We might crumple his periscope with a burst from the machine gun."

"He would poke up another tube and then smash through us bows on. I wish he would either beat it or finish up his dirty work. I dislike being stared at. It makes me nervous"

The prowling U-boat had circled the crippled seaplane by this time, still submerged, as though fearing a trap. Uncanny it was to watch the creeping periscope and to picture the German officer standing at the lower end of the long tube in the brilliantly lighted compartment, perhaps jesting at the plight of the *verdamt* Yankee aviators who had sworn to destroy the glorious submarines of the unconquerable fatherland. It was this brutal, gloating delay that infuriated the two ensigns. They were being played with as a cat torments a mouse. The thing was unsportsmanlike, and Bob Carnahan, a fighting man by instinct, was in no mood for discretion.

"We lose, Al, either way we play it," he growled. "I'd sooner drown than throw up my hands to that damned murderer. Crawl aft to the machine gun and we'll wait for his next move. By Jove, I believe he's coming up."

The submarine showed the dripping top of the conning tower and presently the long deck heaved in sight, the water washing over it like a bit of reef. Bold against the gray paint stood out the lettering—"U-62." The unpleasant apparition fascinated the two ensigns. It was very much as though a bad dream had come true. For the moment they felt more curiosity than alarm. In all their glib talk of *strafing* Fritz it had not occurred to them that Fritz might take a hand at the game. He was not apt to feel kindly toward the Allied seaplanes which hunted and bombed him without mercy, earnestly seeking to blow him to kingdom come with all hands.

Ensign Chew had cuddled close to his machine gun. It was obvious that he yearned to let fly at the first close-cropped German head which should show itself above the screen of the tiny bridge on top of the conning tower. Bob Carnahan had learned to know his companion as an impulsive youth who was likely to let the consequences go hang and he, therefore, shouted a caution to hold steady and avoid trouble until the enemy had shown his hand. The vindictive Chew scowled at the U-boat and glumly obeyed orders.

They heard the clang of metal as the round hatch plates were flung back, unsealing the submarine and opening an exit

through the conning tower. There emerged into view a burly figure of a man in oilskins who wore an officer's cap. Two sailors clambered up after him and rested their rifles upon the railing of the bridge. He raised the binoculars which hung from his neck by a strap and subjected the two castaways to critical inspection. Then he bawled through a megaphone:

"I vill you alive take as prisoners. It iss a *gross* kindness, so? I haf not forgetted the *King Stephen* trawler what left the crew of a Zeppelin to be drownded in the Nort' Sea, but a German officer vas a gentleman always. He makes war not like the dishonorable English."

This was too much for the temper of Ensign Bob Carnahan who threw up his head at the challenge and shouted back

"German gentlemen—hell! Do you think we have forgotten the *Lusitania?*"

The florid face of the submarine commander turned a richer hue as he turned and said something to the two sailors who filled the small space beside him. They stood at attention, the rifles ready for action.

"Yump in the *wasser* and swim to my boat, *sehr schnell,*" was the command hurled at the American ensigns. The voice was harsh and unsteady with anger.

"We don't know how to swim," lied Al Chew. "You will have to send over and get us."

Carnahan had ceased to gaze at the submarine. His attention had shifted for the moment, but the horizon was still empty, with nothing to indicate that a friendly vessel might intervene in time to save them. He was staring into the sea quite close at hand, but the uneasy waves merely disclosed a drifting bit of wood like a fragment of a spar. Tense and alert with some sudden excitement, he passed the word to the rear cockpit:

"That's the way, Al. String him along. Play for time. Anything to keep him just where he is."

"What is the idea, Bob?"

"Never mind. I can't explain now, but there is about one chance in a hundred that we may be able to pull something off. Annoy the 'honorable German gentleman.' Insult him, and go as far as you like, but keep away from that machine gun unless he shoots first."

Again the submarine commander yelled the order to surrender by jumping into the sea, but the obstreperous Yankees persisted in debating the question. The U-boat carried a collapsible canvas skiff, objected Carnahan, and it was the plain duty of the captors to launch it and take off the prisoners who were already exhausted and too feeble to stay afloat.

"But you haf life jackets on yourselves, stupids!" yelled the exasperated Teuton as he snatched a rifle from a sailor and flourished it wildly.

"Filled with sawdust instead of cork! Yankee graft!" pleasantly explained Carnahan. "You have read your own newspapers, so you know all about it."

"How perfectly lovely!" applauded Ensign Chew from his end of the derelict. "The square-headed boob actually believes it. Better be ready to duck, Bob. He is sincerely peeved."

This diagnosis was accurate. Presumably to frighten them into prompt obedience, the irate commander threw up the rifle and pulled trigger. A bullet whistled over Carnahan's head and another drilled a hole in the coaming at his elbow. The result was totally unlooked for aboard the German submarine. Instead of diving into the sea with a cry of "Kamerad," the impetuous Ensign Chew emitted a joyous war whoop. The enemy had opened fire on the American flag. Tradition knew but one reply, from John Paul Jones to David Farragut. So it appeared, at least, to young Alfred Chew as he instantaneously cleared for action and sighted the machine gun to sweep the bridge of the submarine. With a vicious rat-tat-tat a stream of bullets sought the mark.

The wrecked seaplane was an unsteady gun platform which was all that saved the German commander and his two sailors from being so many perforated ruins. A tattered wing of the air craft tripped in a wave just as the ensign fired and the abrupt check marred his intentions. He shot a trifle low, and the bullets spattered the conning tower. In a twinkling the bridge was vacant. It was incredible that a burly commander in oilskins and two sturdy German sailors could have vanished through the little round hatch without jamming together and sticking fast. By way of an encore, Ensign Chew fired another burst and lavishly punctuated the distasteful lettering, "U-62." The bullets rattled against the thin steel plating like pebbles on a tin roof.

"They can't pop out on deck again," hopefully observed the American gunner. "The lid is on that outfit. But I'm afraid I have spilled the beans, Bob, old man. You told me to sit tight and wait 'em out. I just couldn't help cutting loose when he tried to pot you."

"Thanks. I don't believe you have spoiled the show," Carnahan replied, with an unruffled mien. "We couldn't have beguiled him with conversation any longer. He turned nasty. You have bottled them up, sure enough. Not a man of them will dare to lift a hatch to get out and serve a gun. And they won't care to waste an expensive torpedo on us."

"He will ram us right away, then. Nothing more doing with my machine gun. A can opener would be more useful."

Ensign Carnahan was again absorbed in staring at the water where the bit of painted wood still floated within range of his vision. The seaplane had drifted with the wind and the German submarine had forged a little way ahead, so that the relative positions were altered. The tossing fragment of spar, or whatever it was, now lay between the two craft. Carnahan beckoned and Ensign Chew scrambled forward to join him. They paid no heed to the submarine which slowly gathered steerage way under power of her surface engines.

"Yes, Fritz will ram us," said Carnahan, as though thinking aloud, "but he isn't a bit anxious to drown the pair of us. He may be under orders, as I figure it out, to capture any American naval officers alive. He behaves that way, at any rate. So if he comes ahead to smash our old boat into kindling he will move at slow speed and then try to fish us up out of the wet."

"Good dope," agreed Ensign Chew. "That machine gun of ours makes it impossible for him to turn the trick in any other way. Too good to be true, Bob, but it does look to me as if we had a chance to win. You're bright. I'll have to hand it to you."

"Watch it, Al! Look sharp! When the next wave breaks, just beyond the floating stick," breathlessly exclaimed Carnahan.

Close to the surface there appeared for an instant what looked like a string of croquet balls, for shape and size. They were linked together in some manner, rising, then dipping, invisible excepting for such a fleeting glimpse as this. The ensigns looked up to measure the course of the submarine which was turning in a wide arc to point her bow at the helpless seaplane. Yes, the strategem of delay had been nicely timed. Wind and tide had set the three factors of the equation in the proper relative position. Carnahan had maneuvered against almost hopeless odds, but the gods of chance were kind to him and the luck of the American navy held good.

"Slow, Fritzie! Left rudder now, and then straight ahead," implored Al Chew, his weather-cracked lips quivering with excitement.

"He can't miss it now," croaked Carnahan. "Our side is turned square toward him, and that's where he wants to hit and rip the old bus wide open. I'll bet you a hundred he never gets here."

"You're on, Bob. It would be a pleasure to lose. *Oh, boy!* Here he comes, dead on the mark, and as wicked as sin!"

The long gray hull of the predatory U-boat was moving sluggishly while the sea frothed across the deck. It displayed no indications of human life or guidance. Monstrous, uncouth, slinking, it profaned the brave and manly traditions of blue water. The youthful American officers, forgetting how cold and wet and fatigued they were, oblivious even of the grave peril that menaced them, watched the enemy draw near. This was the great adventure, the sporting chance.

"Supposing the scheme doesn't work," whispered Chew. "It may fail to connect."

"Then it's good night," said Carnahan. He gulped as he spoke.

The U-boat was drawing near the tossing bit of spar and that curious string of little globes fastened all in a row which so closely resembled croquet balls. To the German commander and the helmsman behind the thick bull's-eye windows of the conning tower these harmless particles of flotsam were no doubt invisible. Undeviatingly the submarine held its course until the swaying, half-submerged row of balls were directly athwart the rounded bow. Bob Carnahan clasped his comrade around the neck, and they danced in water up to their knees.

The nose of the submarine lunged under between two waves and picked up the odd cluster of balls. They clung to the deck instead of being washed off and many more of them appeared, dragged from beneath the

surface, yards and yards of them, fathom after fathom all linked together in a meshwork of tarred cords. And attached to this system of floats was a vast net fashioned of wire cable which had been suspended deep down in the sea. It trailed past the sides of the submarine and wrapped itself about the hull before the startled German commander could realize the danger or order his engines reversed.

The net clung to its quarry like the tentacles of an octopus. It was strongly, cunningly fashioned, yet so light and pliant that it entangled itself with any moving object unlucky enough to encounter the trap. In this instance the net accomplished what was expected of it, for the submarine failed to check its headway until the whirling propellers had become wound up in the tenacious fabric. The predicament was precisely like that of a fly in a spider's web. To struggle was to make matters so much worse. The destruction of the wrecked seaplane had ceased to interest the German officers and crew. "I win a hundred off you," cried Bob Carnahan, pounding his friend on the back. "We pulled it off—so far—but here's hoping and praying for the second act."

"If he has sense enough to stay quiet, just as he is, the beggar can set his men to hacking away with axes and maybe clear himself," anxiously suggested Ensign Chew. "I guess I had better put a crimp in that little stunt."

He hastily returned to his machine gun and trained it on the conning tower, thereby anticipating the movements of the German crew. One of them cautiously raised his head above the bridge screen and young Chew riddled the strip of canvas with a rattling fusillade. It was to be conjectured that exposure of this kind was indubitably fatal.

"We have bagged a submarine, but we don't know what to do with it," complained Carnahan. "I might swim over and ask 'em to surrender, but what's the use? I am still expecting the grand finale, but it seems to be delayed or something."

"He will fill his tanks and submerge," argued Chew. "He can drop down forty or fifty feet and let the sweep of the tide carry him clear of us and the nifty machine gun. Then he can come up and try to cut himself clear, or maybe he'll sit on the bottom until dark."

"If he doesn't drag that little spar buoy under with him he will be out of luck. It will give our surface patrols a clew to locate him. The buoy caught my eye first thing. That was how I happened to look for the net. I saw the admiralty sheds at Dover where they manufacture the stuff—went all through 'em with a British navy buddy."

They beheld the baffled U-boat sink lower until the deck had vanished and the conning tower was lapped by the sea. With negative buoyancy established, the commander risked starting his motors in order that a thrust ahead might give his boat a downward slant and so carry her to the desired depth. Possibly he hoped that the screws might thrash themselves clear of the enveloping net. Apparently the attempt was successful. The conning tower, then the slender periscope, moving slowly, were seen to pass from sight, and the sea boiled white to mark the plunge.

Ensign Carnahan sighed, ungratefully ignoring the fact that he had just gained his liberty and perhaps his life.

"Wouldn't that break your heart, Al? He belonged to us. You see, I felt absolutely certain that he was going to blow himself up, once he ran afoul of that net. The British have invented a new mine for this special purpose—a cute little package of TNT which is tied to the bottom of the nets, about fifty feet apart. They explode on contact. I watched a hundred women putting 'em together in Dover. Maybe this net of ours had no mines on it. If a U-boat so much as touches one of these contraptions when she gets wrapped up in a net, it's all——"

A deadened explosion flung the two young man headlong. The concussion fairly lifted the waterlogged hull of the seaplane. It simply fell apart like a watermelon dropped on a pavement. Bewildered, the two ensigns found themselves swimming amid the wreckage. Freed of the weight of the engine, a side of the boat came bobbing up and floated as a raft to which Carnahan clung. Chew attached himself to a part of the bow in which the air chamber was intact. They lashed these fragments together and managed to haul their bodies half out of water. During this struggle for existence they were conscious that the sea was tremendously agitated, churned into muddy whirlpools which subsided in greasy combers that

rolled without breaking. The air reeked with the heavy smell of crude oil and a dirty litter of débris was smeared over a slowly spreading area.

Bob Carnahan dashed the spray from his eyes and vainly looked for survivors of the U-62. It was Ensign Chew who first caught sight of a body which was washing past him no more than a dozen yards distant. Dead, of course, he concluded, but one arm seemed to move of its own volition and the man was floating face upward. The ensign recognized the commander of the lost submarine and swam to reach him. Carnahan splashed in his wake, and together they supported the insensible German until he could be towed to the rude raft and lifted thereupon. His head was badly gashed and he breathed ever so feebly, but there was life in him.

Fortunately the succor so long delayed was now close at hand. The castaways could not have lived through another hour in this icy water. They had come to the end of their strength. It was a British destroyer that sighted them and approached cautiously, as though picking a course, instead of tearing along at its usual foaming gait. A boat was lowered, and the sympathetic seamen were about to lift Ensign Bob Carnahan over the gunwale when he hoarsely protested:

"The prisoner first, if you please, and be mighty careful of him. He is the net result."

Whisked aboard the destroyer, the two ensigns were thawed out beside the wardroom stove. The skipper insisted that they be tucked into bed, but they politely refused and in borrowed clothes they sipped comforting glasses of hot rum and water and told their wondrous yarn to a group of rosy young officers.

"We have been looking for you all over the place," explained one of them. "A pigeon of yours got back to Dunkirk. You drifted a lot, I presume, and—er—we never dreamed of finding you just here, don't you know."

"My message may have given the wrong bearings," Carnahan admitted, with a blush. "I wasn't quite sure of my position after the weather turned so thick and squally. Just where were we when you found us, may I ask?"

"Inside the net barrage that was laid to catch the enemy if they try to go down Channel. We were keeping clear of it, do you see, when we heard an explosion——"

"That was U-62. We noticed it ourselves" said Ensign Alfred Chew.

"Right-o. The blighter must have touched off a mine while he was mucking about in the nets. That is the trick of it. And you chaps actually coaxed him into blowing himself to blazes. My word! How extraordinarily clever!"

"Carnahan did it," modestly affirmed Ensign Chew.

"Snappy work with the machine gun really finished the business for Fritz," loyally exclaimed Bob. "It got his goat, and then we had him where we wanted him."

Before the hurrying destroyer reached Dunkirk the surgeon reported that the captured commander of U-62 would probably recover from his injuries.

Lieutenant Chuck Bevans, weary with the day's work, was at the mooring berth when the destroyer slipped into the basin. Darkness had fallen over the shattered, melancholy seaport of Dunkirk. The good news had been sent him by wireless, and as his haggard but exultant brace of youngsters limped up the gangway he shook hands with them, and exclaimed:

"Well done! These Britishers credit you with the destruction of a big, sea-going sub. It means a decoration or two. Wow, but I am glad to get you back alive and kicking. I cursed myself all day for letting you go."

"There was no need of worrying about us," grandly replied Ensign Carnahan. "We had a perfectly bully time, didn't we, Al?"

"You said it for me, Bob. This is the end of a perfect day."

They trudged in the direction of their humble quarters among the stone quays and passed the long, low mound with the roof of sandbags and boiler plate. In all likelihood they would be scrambling into the dugout a few hours later, for the sky had cleared and the stars were out.

"This is home, sweet home," murmured Ensign Carnahan, "and it is plenty good enough for me. I surely do pity the poor guys in the service who can't get overseas duty."

Ensign Alfred Chew breathed a long sigh of contentment. With a glance at the shining stars overhead, he responded:

"Well, if the darned old boche comes over to-night, I think we have given him a pretty fair excuse for bombing us."

A Pilgrim in the Cumberlands

By Charles Neville Buck

Author of "The Code of the Mountains," Etc.

(A Three-Part Story—Part III.)

CHAPTER XIV.

IT was a hopeless game and a grim one. He could not cover all the defenses long in single-handed effort, and the best he could hope for was to die in ample companionship. Now, two men had reached broad-girthed oaks, halfway between thicket and house. There they were safe for the next rush.

So this was the end of the matter! Spurrier reloaded his rifle and went down the ladder. Hastily he carried Glory into the room at the back and overturned his heavy table to serve as a final barricade. He elected to die here when they swarmed the door from which he could no longer keep them, crowning the battle with a finale of punishment as they crowded through the breach.

But the minutes dragged with irksome tension. He was keyed up now, wire-tight, for the finish, and yet silence fell again and denied him the relief of action. To Spurrier it was like a long and cruel delay imposed upon a man standing blindfolded and noosed on the scaffold trap. Then the quiet was ripped with a totally wasteful fusillade, as though every attacker outside were pumping his gun in a contest of speed rather than effect.

Spurrier smiled grimly. Let them burn their powder—he would save his till they massed in front of his muzzle and the barrier fell.

"When the barrier fell!" Crouched there behind the table where he meant to sell his life in that brief space that seemed long, the words brought with them the memory of one of the few poems that had ever meant much to him—and while he awaited death his mind seized upon the lines—a funeral address in soliloquy!

"For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall——"

He strained his ears to his listening and then through his head ran other verses:

"I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last!
I would hate that Death bandaged my eyes and forebore
And bade me creep past——"

Was that a battering-ram against timber that he heard? He fingered the trigger.

"Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest!"

But the door did not fall. The rifle cracking became interspersed with alarmed outcries of warning and confusion He could even hear the brush torn with the hurried tramping of running feet, and then the pandemonium abruptly stopped dead, and after a long period of inheld breath there followed a loud rapping on the door and a voice of agonized anxiety shouted

"In God's name open if ye're still alive. It's Cappeze—and friends!"

Ten minutes later, in a crowded room, Bud Hawkins, preacher and physician, laid one hand on Spurrier's shoulder and the other on Cappeze's.

"Men," he said in a hushed voice, "I fears me ther shot thet hit her was a deadener. Yit I kain't quite fathom hit nuther. She's back in her rightful senses ergin—but she don't seem ter *want* ter live, somehow. She won't put for'ard no effort."

Spurrier wheeled to face them both and his voice came with tense, gasping earnestness.

"Before she dies, Brother Hawkins," he pleaded, "you're a minister of the gospel—I want you to marry us." He wheeled then on the rescuers, who stood breathing heavily from exertion and fight.

"Two of you men stay here as wedding witnesses," he commanded. "One of you ride hell-for-leather to the nearest telephone and call up Lexington. Have a man start

with bloodhounds on a special train. The rest of you get into the timber and fine-comb it for some scrap of cloth—or anything that will give the dogs a chance when they get here."

Once more Spurrier was the officer in command, and snappily his hearers sprang to obedience, but when the place had almost emptied, the three turned and went into the back room, and, kneeling there beside the wounded girl, Spurrier whispered:

"Dearest, the preacher has come—to wed us."

Glory's eyes with their deeps of color were startlingly vivid as they looked out of the pallid face upon which a little while ago John Spurrier had believed the white stamp of death to be fixed.

The features themselves, except the eyes, seemed to have shrunken from weakness into wistful smallness, and if the girl had returned, in the phrases of the preacher, "to her rightful senses" it had been as one coming out of a dream who realizes that she wakes to heartburnings which death had promised to smooth away.

Now, as the man stretched out his hand to take hers and drew a ring from his own little finger, the violet eyes on the rough pillow became transfigured with a luminous and incredulous happiness. But at once they clouded again with gravity and pain.

Spurrier was offering to marry her out of pity and gratitude. He was seeking to pay a debt, and his authoritative words were spoken from his conscience and not from his heart.

So the lips stirred in an effort to speak, failed in that and drooped, and weakly but with determination Glory shook her head. She had been willing to die for him. She could not argue with him, but neither would she accept the perfunctory amends, that he now came proffering.

Spurrier rose, pale and with a tremor of voice as he said to the others: "Please leave us alone—for a few moments." Then when no one was left in the room but the girl on the bed and the man on his knees beside it, he talked as he had never talked before. To him came an eloquence still hot from the shoulder touch of peril and primitive passions—and a love electrified by renewed hope.

Still Glory could not speak and her eyes mirrored rather a wish to be convinced than a true conviction. Spurrier rose at last and called the others back. He himself did not know when once more he took her hand and the preacher stood over them, whether her responses to the services would be affirmative or negative.

To Spurrier marriage had always seemed an opportunity. It was a thing in which an ambitious man could no more afford yielding to uncalculating impulses than in the forming of a major business connection. Marriage must carry a man upward toward the peak of his destiny, and his wife must bring as her dowry, social reënforcements and distinction.

Now, in the darkening room of a log house, with figures clad in patches and hodden gray, he held the hand that was too weak to close responsively upon his own, and listened to the words of a shaggy-headed preacher, whose beard was a stubble and whose lips moved over yellow and fanglike teeth.

Confusedly he heard the questions and his own firm responses to the simple service of marriage as rendered by the backwoods preacher, then his heart seemed to stop and stand as the words were uttered to which Glory must make her answer.

"Will you, Glory, have this man, John Spurrier——"

What would her answer be—assent or negation?

The pause seemed to last interminably as he bent with supplication in his glance over her, and the breath came from his lips with an unconscious sibilance, like escaping steam from a strained boiler, when at last the head on the pillow gave the ghost of a nod.

Even at that moment there lurked in the back of his mind, though not admitted as important, the ghost of realization that he was doing precisely the sort of thing which, in his own world, would not only unclass him but make him appear ludicrous as well.

He was marrying Glory on her deathbed and he thought that doing so would at least make possible the easing of her heart as it beat out its last measure.

He did not think of recovery as possible, but he was not marrying her only as an act of atonement and pity. These pregnant hours had clarified the values of life, and he knew that his love for her was paramount.

Almost as soon as the simple ceremony ended, Glory sank again into unconsciousness, and the father and preacher, sitting

silent in the next room, were unable to forget that though there had been a wedding, they were also awaiting the coming of death.

The night fell with the soft brightness of moon and stars, and through the tangled woods the searchers were following hard on the flight of the assailants—doggedly and grimly, with the burning indignation of men bent on vindicating the good name of their people and community. Yet, so far, the fugitive squad had succeeded not only in eluding capture or recognition, but also in carrying with them their wounded.

From Lexington, where Spurrier had formed strong connections, a deputy sheriff was riding in a caboose behind a special engine as fast as the roadbeds would permit. The smokestack trailed a flat line of hurrying smoke and the whistle screamed startlingly through the night. At the officer's knees, gazing up at him out of gentle eyes that belied their profession, crouched two tawny dogs with long ears—the bloodhounds that were to start from the cabin and give voice in the laurel.

Waiting for them was a torn scrap of blue denim such as rough overalls are made of. It had been found in a brier patch where some fleeing wearer had snarled himself.

Yet two days later the deputy returned from his quest in the timber, shaking his head.

"I'm sorry," he reported. "I've done my best, but it's not been good enough."

"What's the trouble?" inquired Cappeze shortly, and the officer answered regretfully:

"This country is zigzagged and crisscrossed with watercourses—and water throws the dogs off. The fugitives probably made their way by wading wherever they could. The longest run we made was up toward Wolf Pen Branch."

That was the direction, Spurrier silently reflected, of Sim Colby's house, but he made no comment.

Brother Hawkins, who was leaving that afternoon, laid a kindly hand on Spurrier's shoulder.

"Thet's bad news," he said. "But I kin give ye better. I kin almost give ye my gorrantee thet ther gal's goin' ter come through. Hit's *wantin'* ter live thet does hit."

Spurrier's eyes brightened out of the misery that had dulled them, and as to the failure of the chase he reassured himself with the thought that the dogs had started toward Sim Colby's house, and that he himself could finish what they had begun.

And yet on that day when the bobwhites had sounded and the blow had fallen, Sim Colby was nowhere near the opportunity hound's house. He sat tippling in a mining town two days' journey away, and he had no knowledge of what went on at home. His companion was ex-Private Severance—once his comrade in arms.

Spurrier was spoken of. Indeed Colby confided to his intimate that he had sought to kill his old lieutenant, and that though he had failed, his determination stood unaltered and unalterable—and Severance was sympathetic.

For a time after that whatever enemies Spurrier had seemed to have lost their spirit of eagerness. One might have presumed that to the rule of amity which apparently surrounded him, there was no exception—and so the mystery remained unsolved. Even blind Joe Givins made a detour in a journey to stop at Spurrier's house and sing a ballad of his own composition anent the mysterious siege and to express his indignation at the "pizen meanness" of men who would father and carry forward such infamies.

And Glory, who had penetrated so deeply into the shadow that life had seemed ended for her, was recovering. Into her pale cheeks came a new blossoming and into the smile of her lips and eyes a new light that was serene and triumphant. She had been too happy to die.

While the summer waned and the beauties of autumn began to kindle the young wife grew strong and her husband, seemingly, had nothing to do except to wander about the hills with her and discover in her new charms. Neighborly saws and hammers were ringing now as his place was transformed from its simple condition to the "hugest log house on seven creeks."

It was when this refurnished and enlarged place had been completed that the neighbors came from valley, slope, and cove to give their blessing at the housewarming which was also, belatedly, the "infaring."

That homely, pioneer observance with which the groom brings home his bride, had not been possible after the wedding, but now Aunt Erie Toppitt had come over and prepared entertainment on a lavish if homely scale since Glory was not yet well.

And the labors of preparation were onerous. Aunt Erie stood at the open door constituting, with Spurrier and his wife, a "receiving line" of three, and her wrinkled, old face bore an affectation of morose exhaustion as to each guest she made the same declaration:

"I hopes an' prays ye all enjoys this hyar party—Gawd knows *my* back's broke."

But Spurrier had not in his letters to Harrison mentioned his marriage, and to Vivian he had not written at all. He thought they would hardly understand.

Among the guests who came to that housewarming was one chance visitor who was not expected. He came because the people under whose roof he was being sheltered, had "fotched him along," and he was Wharton, the man whose purpose hereabouts had set gossip winging aforetime.

It seemed to some of the local visitors that despite his entire courtesy, Spurrier did not evince any profound liking for this other "furriner," and since they had come to accept their host as a trustworthy oracle, they took the tip and were prepared to dislike Wharton, too.

That evening, while blind Joe Givins fiddled, and dancers "ran their sets" on the smooth, new floor, a group of men gathered on the porch outside and smoked. Among them for a time were both Spurrier and Wharton.

The latter raised something of a laugh when he confidently predicted that the oil prosperity, for all its former collapse and present paralysis, was not permanently dead.

"The world needs oil and there's oil here," he declared with unctuous conviction. "The men who are willing to gamble on that proposition will win out in the end."

"Stranger," responded Uncle Jimmy Litchfield, taking his pipestem from between his teeth and spitting contemptuously at the earth, "ye sees, settin' right hyar afore ye a man that 'lowed he was a millionaire one time, 'count of this hyar same oil ye're discoursin' so hopeful about. Thet man's me. I'd been dirt-pore all my days, oftentimes hurtin' fer ther plum' needcessities of life. I'm mighty nigh thet pore still."

"Did you strike oil in the boom days?" demanded Wharton as he bent eagerly forward.

"I owned me a farm, them days, on t'other side ther mounting," went on the narrator, "an' them oil men come along an' wanted ter buy ther rights offen me."

"Did you sell?"

Uncle Billy chuckled. "They up an' offered me a royalty of one-eighth of ther whole production. They proved hit up ter me by 'rithmetic an' algebry how hit would make me rich over an' above all avarice—but I said no, I wouldn't take no eighth. I stud out fer a *sixteenth* by crickety!"

Both Spurrier and Wharton smothered their laughter as the latter inquired gravely:

"Did they meet your terms?"

"They done better'n thet. They said, 'We'll give ye two sixteenths,' an' thet's when I 'lowed I was es good es a Pierpont Morgan. I wouldn't nuver hurt fer no needcessity no more."

"And what was the outcome of it all?" asked Wharton.

Uncle Jimmy's face darkened. "The come-uppance of ther whole blame business war thet a lot of pore devils what hed done been content with poverty found hit twicet as hard ter go on bein' pore because they'd got to entertainin' crazy dreams ther same as me. Any man thet talks oil ter me now's got ter buy outright an' pay me spot cash. I ain't playin' no more of them royalty games."

"That's fair enough," said Wharton. "But it seems to me that you people are taking the wrong tack. Because the boom collapsed once, you are shutting the door against the possibility of its coming again—and it's going to come again."

"A man kin git stung once," volunteered another native, "an' hit's jest tough luck or bewitchment. Ef he gits stung twicet on ther same trumpery, he ain't no more then a plum', daft fool."

Wharton lighted a fresh cigar and turned toward Spurrier.

"Mr. Spurrier here, is a man you all know and trust——" he hazarded. "I understand that he's seen oil fields in the West and Mexico. I wonder what he thinks about it all."

On the dark porch Spurrier looked at his visitor for a few minutes in silence and his first reply was a quiet question.

"Did I tell you I'd seen oil fields in operation?" he inquired, and Wharton stammered a little.

"I was under that impression," he said. "Possibly I am wrong."

"No—you are right enough," answered

the other evenly. "I just didn't remember mentioning it. What is your question exactly?"

"If I have a hunch that oil holds a future here and am willing to back that hunch, don't you think I am acting wisely to do it?"

The host sat silent while he seemed to weigh the question with judicial deliberation, and during the pause he realized that the little group of men were waiting intently for his utterance as for the voice of the Delphic oracle.

"I have seen oil operation and oil development," he said at last. "I have lived here for some time and know the history of the former boom, but I have not bought a foot of ground. That ought to make my opinion clear."

"Then you don't believe in the future?"

"I don't believe that the quantity production warrants development. This is a 'teaser' field. If any of my friends here came to me, asking advice on an offer based on oil I should answer——" He broke off there and Wharton leaned forward again.

"Yes," he prompted, "what *would* you answer?"

"I would advise," went on Spurrier still in that even, judicial voice, "that he first warn the prospective buyer that he was taking a long chance on oil—and that if that buyer persisted in his desire, he should sell. The profit would be his and the buyer would have no complaint on the ground of unfairness."

"I'll admit," said Wharton modestly, "that if I lost some money, it wouldn't break me—and I'm a stubborn man when I get a hunch. Well, I'm going in to watch them dance."

He rose and went indoors and Uncle Jimmy, when he put a question acted, in effect, as spokesman for them all.

"What does ye think of thet feller, Mr. Spurrier?"

"I think," said the opportunity hound crisply, "that he's a fool, and Scripture says, 'a fool and his money are soon parted.'"

"An' ef he seeks ter buy?"

"Sell—by all means—if the price is right!"

The next day when they were alone Glory said:

"I don't like that man Wharton. He's got sneaky eyes."

Her husband laughed. "I can't say that he struck me pleasantly," he admitted. "We talked oil out on the porch. He was the optimist and I the pessimist."

And it was to happen that the first rift in Glory's lute of happiness was to come out of Wharton's agency, though she did not recognize it as his.

For in these times, despite a happiness that made her sing through the days, something like the panic of stage fright was settling over her: a thing yet of the future, but some day to be faced.

So long as life ran quietly here, like the shaded streams that went down until they made the rivers of the greater and outer world, she was confident mistress of her life and had no forebodings. Spurrier loved her and she worshiped him—but out there beyond the ridges, the activities of his larger life were calling—or would call. Then they must leave here and she began to dread the thousand little mistakes and the humiliations that might come to him because of her unfamiliarity with that life. Since the bearings of achievement are delicate, she even feared that she might throw out of gear and poise the whole machinery of his success, and in secret Glory was poring over absurd books on etiquette and deportment. That these stereotyped instructions would only hamper her own naturally plastic spirit, she did not know when she read and reread chapters headed, "How to Enter a Drawing-room" and "Hints upon Refined Conversation."

That Spurrier would suggest going without her to any field into which his work called him, she did not dream. That he would leave her to wait for him here, as the companion only of his backwoods hours, her pride never contemplated.

Yet in the fall Spurrier did just that thing, and to the letter which induced its doing was signed the name of George Wharton. The latter wrote:

> We must begin to lay out lines for work with the next legislature. There are people in Louisville and Lexington whom you should meet and talk with. I think you had better make your headquarters at one of the Louisville clubs, and when you get here I will put you in touch with the proper bearings.

That much might have puzzled any of the mountaineers who had taken their own cues from Spurrier's thinly concealed manner of hostility to Wharton, but the last part of the letter would have explained that, too:

The little game down at your house was nothing short of masterly. Your acting was superb, and though you were the star, I think I may claim to have played up to you well. The device of gaining their confidence so that, of their own accord, they turned to you for counsel—and then seeming to gloom on me when I talked oil, was pretty subtle. I could openly preach buying and instead of turning away from me in suspicion, they fell on me for a sucker. I—and others acting for me—have, as the result, secured a good part of the options we need—and you appear to be of all men, the least interested.

But when Spurrier had kissed Glory good-by and she had waved a smiling farewell, she turned back into her house and covered her face with her hands.

"I don't want to believe it," she declared. "I won't believe it—but it looks like he's ashamed to take me with him. Not that I blame him—only—only I've got to make myself over. He's *got* to be proud of me!"

CHAPTER XV.

When Spurrier came back for a short stay in the hills between periods of quiet but strenuous affairs in Louisville, he brought gifts that delighted Glory and a devotion that made her forget her misgivings. She had him back, and he found the house expressing in many small ways a taste and discrimination which brought to him a flush of pleasurable surprise. Glory knew the menace that hung over Spurrier. She knew of the malevolent and elusive enmities to which her own life had so nearly become forfeit, and the old terror of the mountain woman for her man became the cross that she must carry with her. Because of her militant father's antagonisms she had been inured from childhood to the taut moment of suspense that came with every voice raised at the gate and every knock sounding on the door.

There was an element of possible threat in each arrival. She had become, as one has need to be, under such circumstances, somewhat fatalistic as to the old dangers. Now that the fear embraced her husband as well as her father, the philosophy which she had cultivated failed her. Yet their happiness was so strong that it threw off these things and drew upon the treasury of the present.

Spurrier, who talked little of his own dangers, was far from forgetting. His suspicion of Colby strengthened, and he looked forward to the day as inevitable when there must be a reckoning between them, which would not be a final reckoning unless one of them died, and for that encounter he went grimly prepared.

One thing puzzled him. Of Sim Colby he had thought as a somewhat solitary character, whose relations with his neighbors, though amicable, were yet rather detached. He had seemed to have few intimates, yet if he had led this attack, he was palpably able to muster at his back a considerable force of men for a desperate project. That meant that the infection of hatred against himself had spread from a single enmity to the number, at least, of the men who had joined in the battle, and it had been a battle in which more than one had fallen. Before, he had recognized a single enemy. Henceforth he must acknowledge plural enmities.

And along that line of reasoning the next step followed logically.

Who would suggest himself as so natural a leader for a murder enterprise as Sam Mosebury, whose record was established in such matters? Certainly if this suspicion were well-founded it would be safest to know.

Spurrier, despite all he had heard of Sam Mosebury, was reluctant to entertain the thought. The man might be, as Cappeze painted him, the head and front of an infamously vicious system, yet there was something engaging and likable about him, which made it hard to believe that for hire or any motive not nearly personal he would have conspired to do murder.

So among the many claims upon Spurrier's attention was the effort to find out where Sam Mosebury stood, and it was while he was thinking of that problem that he encountered the object of his thoughts in person. The spot was one distant from his own house. Indeed it was near Colby's cabin—still apparently empty—that the meeting took place.

The opportunity hound had made several trips over there of late, because he required to know something of Colby's activities, and, of course, when he came he observed a surreptitious caution which sought to guard against any hint leaking through to Colby of his own surveillance. He firmly believed that Sim was "hiding out," and that despite the seeming emptiness of his habitation he was not far away.

So it was Spurrier, the law-abiding man,

who was skulking in the laurel while the notorious Mosebury walked the highway "upstanding" and openly—and the man in the thicket stooped low to escape discovery. But his foot slipped in the tangle and a rotting branch cracked under it, giving out a sound which brought Mosebury to an abrupt halt with his head warily raised and his rifle poised. He, too, had enemies and must walk in caution.

There had been times when Sam's life had hinged on just such trivial things as the snapping of a twig, and now, peering through the thickets Spurrier saw a flinty hardness come into his eyes.

Sam stepped quietly but swiftly to the roadside and sheltered himself behind a rock. He said no word, but he waited, and Spurrier could feel that his eyes were boring into his own place of concealment with a scrutiny that went over it studiously and keenly, foot by foot.

He hurriedly considered what plan to pursue. If Mosebury was in league with Colby, to show himself would be almost as undesirable a thing as to show himself to Colby direct. Yet if he stayed there with the guilty seeming of one in hiding, Mosebury would end by locating him—and might assume that the hiding was itself a proof of enmity. He decided to declare himself so he shouted boldly: "It's John Spurrier," and rose a moment later into view.

Then he came forward, thinking fast, and when the two met in the road, mendaciously said:

"I guess it looks queer for a man with a clear conscience to take to the timber that way, Mr. Mosebury—but you may remember that I was recently attacked, and I don't know who did it."

Mosebury nodded. "I'd be ther last man ter fault ye fer thet," he concurred. "I was doin' nigh erbout ther same thing myself, but I didn't know ye often fared over this way, Mr. Spurrier."

"No, it's off my beat." Spurrier was now lying fluently in what he fancied was to be a game of wits with a man who might have led the siege upon his house. "I was just going over to Stamp Carter's place. He wanted me to advise him about a property deal."

For a space Sam stood gravely thoughtful, and when he spoke his words astonished the other.

"Seein' we *hev* met up, accidentallike, I've got hit in head ter tell ye somethin' deespite hit ain't rightly none of my business." Again he paused, and it was plain that he was laboring under embarrassment, so Spurrier inquired:

"What is it?'

"Of course, I've done heered ther talk erbout yore bein' attackted. Don't ye really suspicion no special man?"

"Suspicion is one thing, Mr. Mosebury, and knowledge is another."

"Yes, thet's Bible truth, an' yit I wouldn't marvel none of yore suspicions went over thet-away—an' came up not fur off from hyar." He nodded his head toward Sim Colby's house, and Spurrier, who was steeled to fence, gave no indication of astonishment. He only inquired:

"Why should Mr. Colby hold a grudge against me?"

"I ain't got no power of knowin' thet." Mosebury spoke dryly. "An' es I said afore, hit ain't none of my business nohow—still I does know thet ye've been over hyar some sev'ral times, an' every time ye came, ye came quietlike es ef ye sought ter see Sim afore Sim seed *you.*"

"You think I've been here before?"

"No, sir, I don't think hit. I knows hit. I seed ye."

"Saw me!"

"Yes, sir, seed ye. Hit's my business to keep a peeled eye in my face."

So Spurrier's careful secrecy had been transparent after all, and if this man was an ally of Colby's, Colby already shared his knowledge. More than ever Spurrier felt sure that his suspicions of the man whose eyes had changed color, were grounded in truth.

"Howsomever," went on Mosebury quietly, "I ain't nuver told Sim nothin' erbout hit. I ain't, gin'rally speakin', no meddler, but ef so be I kin forewarn ye erginst harm, hit would pleasure me ter do hit."

There was a cordial ring of sincerity in the manner and voice, which it was hard to doubt, so the other said gravely:

"Thank you. I did suspect Colby, but I have no proof."

"I don't know whether Sim grudges ye or not," continued Mosebury. "He ain't nuver named ther matter ter me nowise, guise, ner fashion—but Sim *wasn't with ther crowd thet went atter ye.* He didn't even know nothin' erbout hit. Sometimes a man

comes to grief by barkin' up ther wrong tree."

Again suspicion came to the front. This savored strongly of an attempt to alibi a confederate, and Spurrier inquired bluntly:

"Since you broached this subject, I think it's fair to ask you another question. You tell me who *didn't* come. Do you know who *did?*"

For a moment Mosebury's face remained blank, then he spoke stiffly.

"I said I'd be glad ter warn ye—but I didn't say I war willin' ter name no names. Thet would be mighty nigh ther same thing es takin' yore quarrel onto myself."

"Then that's all you can tell me—that it wasn't Colby?"

"Mr. Spurrier," rejoined the mountaineer seriously, "ye *knows* jedgmatically an' p'intedly thet ye've got enemies thet means business. I ain't nuver seed a man yet in these hills what belittled a peril sich as yourn thet didn't pay fer hit—with his life."

"I don't belittle it, but what can I do?"

Sam Mosebury stood with a gaze that wandered off over the broken sky line. So grave was his demeanor that when his words came they carried the shock of inconsistent absurdity.

"Thar's a witch woman, thet dwells nigh hyar. Ef I war in yore stid, I'd git her ter read ther signs fer me an' tell me what I had need guard erginst most."

"I'm afraid," answered Spurrier, repressing his contempt with difficulty, "I'm too skeptical to pin my faith to signs and omens."

Again the mountain man was looking gravely across the hills, but for a moment the eyes had flashed humorously.

"I reckon we don't need ter cavil over thet, Mr. Spurrier. I don't sot no master store by witchcraft foolery my ownself. Mebby ye recalls thet oncet I told ye a leetle story erbout my cat an' my mockin' bird."

"Yes," Spurrier began to understand now. "You sometimes speak in allegory. But this time I don't get the meaning."

"Waal, hit's this fashion. I *don't* know who ther men war thet tried ter kill ye. Thet's God's truth, but I've got my own notions an' mebby they ain't fur wrong. I ain't goin' ter name no names—but ef so be ye wants ter talk ter ther witch woman, *I'll* hev speech with her fust. What comes outen magic kain't hardly make me no enemies—but mebby hit *mout* enable ye ter discern somethin' thet would profit ye ter a master degree."

Spurrier stood looking into the face of the other and then impulsively he thrust out his hand.

"Mr. Mosebury," he said, "I'll be honest with you. I half suspected you—because I'd met you at Colby's and I knew you hated Cappeze. I owe you an apology, and I'm glad to know I was wrong."

"Mr. Spurrier," replied the other, "ef I *hed* attempted yore life I wouldn't hev failed, an', moreover, I don't hate old Cappeze. Ther man thet wins out don't hev no need ter harbor hatreds. He hates me because he sought ter penitentiary me—an' failed."

"When shall we go to consult the oracle?" asked Spurrier, and Mosebury shook his head.

"I reckon mebby I mout seem over cautious—even timorouslike ter ye, in bein' so heedful erbout keepin' outen sight in this matter," he said. "But them thet knows my record, knows I *ain't,* jest ter say easy skeered. You go home an' wait an' afore long I'll write ye a letter, tellin' ye when ter go an' how ter go. Then ye kin make ther journey by yoreself."

"That looks like common sense to me," declared the other, and he went home forgetting the witch woman on the way, because of the other and lovelier witchcraft that he knew awaited him in his own house.

Spurrier, despite his dangers, responsibilities, and conflict of purposes, was happy. He was happy in a simpler and less complicated way than he had ever been before, because his heart was in the ascendancy, and Glory, he thought, was "livin' up to her name."

If he could have thrust some other things into the same dark cupboard of half-contemptuous philosophy to which he relegated his own dangers, he might have been even happier. But a mentor who had rarely troubled him in past years became insistent and audible through the silences—speaking with the voice of conscience.

He remembered telling Vivian Harrison, over the consommé, that pearls did not make oysters happy and that these illiterates of the hills might have hidden wealth in the shells of their isolation and gain nothing more than the oyster. Indeed, he had thought of them no more than the pearl

fisherman thinks of the low form of life whose diseased state gives birth to treasure. They inhabited a terrain over which he and the forces of American Oil and Gas were to do battle, and like birds nesting on a battlefield, they must take their chances.

It was no longer possible to maintain that callous indifference. These men, to whom he could not, without disclosing his strategy and defeating his purpose, tell the truth, had befriended him.

They were human and in many ways lovable. If he succeeded, they would, upon his own advice, have sold their birthrights.

However, he gave an anodyne to his conscience with the thought that if victory came to him there would be wealth enough for all to share. Having won his conquest, he could be generous, rendering back as a gift a part of what should have been theirs by right. The means of doing this he did not yet seek to reduce to formula—he merely drugged his self-reproach with generalities.

Yet in him was being reborn an element of character, which had long been repressed.

And there in the other section of the State where political connections had to be established and the skids of intrigue greased, much stood waiting to be done. Already most of what could be accomplished here on the ground had progressed to a point from which the end could be seen.

John Spurrier, the seeming idler, could control almost all the territory needful for his right of way—all except a tract belonging to Brother Bud Hawkins, cautiously left for the last because he wished to handle that himself and did not yet wish to appear in the negotiations.

In the intricate workings of such a project by a campaign of secrecy, the matter was not only one of acquiring a certain expanse of a definite sort of property in a given region, but of acquiring holdings that commanded the only practicable route through passable gaps. This special lie and trend of ground he thought of and spoke of, in his business correspondence, as "the neck of the bottle." When he held it, it mattered little who else had liquid in the bottle. It could come out only through his neck and, therefore, under his terms. Yet even when that was achieved, there remained the need of the corkscrew without which he himself could make no use of his range-wide jug of crude petroleum. That corkscrew was the charter to be had from a legislature where American Oil and Gas was supposed to have sentinels at the door.

He could not take Glory with him on these trips, because Glory was of the hills, and loyal to the hills—and he could not yet take the natives into his confidence. For the same reason he could give her only business reasons of the most general and evasive character for leaving her behind.

But the work that Spurrier had done so far was only the primary section of a broader design. What he had accomplished affected the oil field on the remote side of Hemlock Mountain the part of the field that the earlier boom had never touched, and his entire project looked to a totality embracing also the "nigh" side, where his operations still existed only in projection.

It was while this situation stood that there came to him one day two letters calling upon him for two irreconcilable courses of action. One was from Louisville, urging him to return there at once to busy himself with political plannings; the other was a rude scrawl from Sam Mosebury setting an appointment with the "witch woman."

Spurrier was reluctant to go to Louisville. It meant laying aside the little paradise of the present for the putting on of the heavy harness. It necessitated another excuse to Glory, and more than that, being away from Glory. Yet that was the bugle call of his mission, and he fancied that whatever threatened him here in the hills was a menace of local effect. If that were true he would not need the warning which the unaccountable desperado, Sam Mosebury, meant to relay to him through channels of alleged magic, until he came back.

Therefore, the witch could wait. But in that detail Spurrier erred, and when he answered the summons that called him to town without his occult consultation, he unwittingly discarded a warning which he needed there no less than in the hills.

He was called upon to choose a turning without pause, and he followed his business instincts. It happened that instinct misled him.

CHAPTER XVI.

One afternoon Trabue, the unadvertised dictator of American Oil and Gas, sat with several of his close subordinates in a conference that had to do with Martin Harrison, the man he assumed to ignore.

"Unless some unforeseen thing sends oil soaring," ventured Oliver Morris, "this fellow Spurrier is having his trouble for his pains. My idea is that he's seeking to tease us into counter activity—and trail after us in the profits."

"And if something *should* send oil soaring," crisply countered Congrove, "he'd have us distanced with a runaway start."

"Who is this man Spurrier?" demanded Trabue himself. "What does our research department report?"

"He's a protégé of Martin Harrison's."

Trabue appeared to find the words illuminating, and a shrewd irony glinted in his brief smile.

"If he's Harrison's man, he's out to knife me—and he has resources at his back. Tell me more about him."

Congrove took from his portfolio a neatly typed memorandum, and read from it aloud:

"Former army officer who gained the sobriquet of 'Plunger' Spurrier: Court-martialed and convicted upon charge of murder, and pardoned through efforts of Senator Beverly. Associated with various enterprises as a general investigator and initiative expert. Rumor has it that Harrison is grooming him as his own successor."

"If his reputation is that of a plunger," argued Morris, "my guess is that he's playing a long-shot bet for a killing."

"And you guess wrong. If Harrison has picked this fellow to wear his own mantle, the man is more than a gambling tout. It is only lunacy to underestimate him or dismiss him with contempt."

Congrove nodded his concurrence and amplified it. "In my judgment he's something of a genius with a chrome-nickeled nerve, but he's adroit as well as bold. He has operated only through others and has kept himself inconspicuous. Except for an accident, we should have had no warning of his activities."

"If he were to get bitten by a rattlesnake," growled Morris savagely, "it would be a lucky thing for us. Of course, we might beguile him into our own camp."

Trabue shook his head in a decisive negation.

"That would only notify him that we recognize his effort and fear it. If the game's big enough, he's not for sale. If it's not big enough, we don't want him." He paused, then added with a grim facetiousness: "As for your other suggestion, we have no rattlesnakes in our equipment."

That conversation had taken place quite a long while before the present, but it set into quiet motion the wheels of a large and powerful organization.

The knowledge that John Spurrier was objectionable to A. O. and G. had filtered through to more local, yet confidential, officials, and through them to "men in the field," and it is characteristic of such delegations of authority, that each department suits the case referred to it to the practical workings of its own environment.

Gentlemen of high business standing in lower Broadway could permit themselves no violence of language, beyond the intimation that this upstart was a nuisance. Translated in the more candid brutality of camp-following parasites in the wildness of the hills, that mild declaration became. "The man needs killin'. Let's git him!"

Now, Spurrier found that the visit to Louisville and Lexington, which had promised to be the matter of weeks, must stretch itself into months, and that until the convening and adjournment of the assembly itself, his presence could be as requisite as that of a ship's officer on the bridge. In one respect he was gratified. American Oil and Gas seemed serenely unsuspicious of any danger. Vigilance seemed lapsed. Those men whose duty was to watch the corporation's interest and to hold in line the needed lawmakers, appeared to regard legislative protection as a thing bought and paid for and safe from trespass.

And Spurrier, knowing better, was secretly triumphant, but without Glory he was far from happy.

Had he known what influences were at work with cancerlike corrosions upon her loyalty, what food was nourishing her anxiety, he would have stolen the time to go to her. Hers was an anxiety which she did not acknowledge. Even to herself she denied its existence and against any outside suggestion of it her hurt pride would have risen in valiant resentment.

But in her heart it talked on in whispers that she could not hush. At night she would waken suddenly, wide-eyed with apprehension and seek to reassure herself by the emphasis of her avowals: "He's *not* ashamed of me. He's not leaving me because of that! He's a big man with big business, and some day he'll take me with him, everywhere!"

When old Cappeze, a man not given to unreflecting or careless speech, flatly ques-

tioned: "Glory—why doesn't John ever take you with him?" she flinched and fell into exculpations that limped.

The old man was quick to note the pained rawness of the nerve he had touched, and he began talking of something else, but when he was alone once more his old eyes took on that fanatic absorption that came of his deep love for his daughter, and he shook his head dubiously over her future.

One day a neighborhood woman came by Glory's house and found her standing at the door. Tassie Plumford neither claimed nor was credited with powers of magic, but she, too, might have been called a "witch woman." In curdled disposition and shrewishness of tongue, she merited the title.

"Waal, waal, Glory Cappeze," she drawled in her rasping, nasal voice. "Yore man hes done built ye a right monstrous fine house, hyar, ain't he?"

"Come in and see it, Mrs. Plumford," invited the young wife. "But my name's Glory Spurrier now—not Cappeze."

In the gesture with which the woman drew her shawl tighter about her lean shoulders, she contrived to convey the affront of suspicion and disbelief.

"No, I reckon I ain't got ther power ter tarry now," she declined. "I don't git much time fer gaddin', an' be yore name whatsoever hit may, there's them hyar-abouts es 'lows yore man lavishes everything on ye but his own self. He's away from ye most of his time, albeit I reckon he's got car fare aplenty fer two."

Glory stiffened, and without a word turned her back on her ungracious visitor. She went into the house with the tilted chin of one who disdains to answer insolent slanders, but in the tenderness of her heart the barb had nonetheless sunk deep. So people were saying that!

Over at Aunt Erie Toppitt's the shrew again halted—and there it seemed that she did have time to "tarry," and roll the morsel of gossip under tongue.

"Mebby she's ther furriner's lawful wife an' then ergin mebby she ain't nuthin' but his woman," opined Tassie Plumford. "Hit ain't none of my business nohow, but a godly woman hes call ter be heedful whar she visits at."

"A goldly woman!" Aunt Erie's tone stung like a hornet attack. "What has godliness got ter do with *you*, anyhow, Tassie Plumford? The records of ther high cote over at Carnettsville hes got *yore* record fer a witness thet swears ter perjury."

Mrs. Plumford trembled with rage but, prudently, she elected to ignore the reference to her legal status.

"Ef they was rightfully married," she retorted, "hit didn't come ter pass twell old man Cappeze diskivered her alone with him —in his house—jest ther two of 'em—an' they wouldn't nuver hev *been* diskivered savin' an' exceptin' fer ther attack on ther furriner." In the self-satisfaction of one who has scored, she added: "I'll be farin' on now, I reckon."

"An' don't nuver come back," stormed Aunt Erie, whose occasional tantrums were as famous as her usual good humor. "Unless ye seeks ter hev ther dawgs sot on ye."

It was not until Christmas time that Spurrier broke away from his activities in Louisville, and then he came bearing gifts and with a heart full of eagerness. He came elated, too, at the fair promise of his prospects, and confident of victory.

So Glory hid the fears that had been growing in her heart and, because of the tidal power of personal fascination and contact, she found it an easy task. While Spurrier was with her, those fears seemed to lose their substance and to stand out as absurdities. They were delirious miasmas dissipated by the sun and daylight of companionship.

Spurrier kept most of his valuable papers in a safety vault in Louisville, but for purposes of reference here, he maintained a complete system of carbon copies, and these must be stored in some place where he could feel sure they were immune from any prying eye. The entire record of his proceedings would be clear to any reader of those memoranda.

While Glory was away one day, he removed a section of the living-room wall and fashioned something in the nature of a secret cabinet, upon which he could rely for these purposes. Before he went away again he shared that secret with her, since in certain exigencies it might be needful that some one should be able to act on wired instructions. He showed her the bit of molding that was removable and which gave entrance to the hidden recess.

"In that strong box," he told her, "are papers of vital importance. If I haven't taken you entirely into my confidence about

them all, dear, it's because they concern other people more closely than myself. All my own affairs are yours—but in the service of others, I must obey instructions and those instructions are rigid."

He took out one envelope though, plainly marked.

"This," he said, "is a paper to be used only in case of extreme emergency. It is an order on the safety-deposit people in Louisville to open my vault to the bearer. In the event of my death, or if I should wire you from a distance, I would want you to use it."

Even that admittance into the veiled sanctum of his business life pleased Glory, and she nodded her head gravely.

On a fine old Blue Grass estate, which exhaled the elegance and ease of the Old South, lived Colonel Merriwell, a life-long friend of Dyke Cappeze. In years long gone he had more than once sought to have Cappeze transfer his activities to a wider field. Now, timber interests called him to the mountains, and though the cold weather had set in, his daughter chose to come with him. She had heard much of the strange and retarded life of the mountains, and because it was so different from the refinements with which she had always been surrounded, she wanted to see it.

When they arrived after traveling conditions that warranted every conception of quaintness, but violated every demand of comfort, the girl from the Bluegrass found Glory a discovery.

At once she recognized that into any drawing-room this wilderness-bred girl could be safely dropped, and that even though she stood in a corner, she would soon become its center.

Helen Merriwell was fascinated by the anomaly of an inherent aristocracy in an encompassing life which was almost squalid, and a bond of sympathy sprang into instant being. The Bluegrass woman knew of instinct, though through no utterance from the loyal lips, that the other was lonely, and when Colonel Merriwell announced his intention of returning home, the daughter decided to continue her visit and its companionship.

To Spurrier's house, too, during the crisp, clear weather of late winter came, without announcement or expectation another visitor. They were two other visitors to be exact, but one so overshadowed his companion in importance that the second became negligible.

At the Carnettsville station the daily train drew up one morning and uncoupled, on a siding, the first private car that had ever run over that piece of roadbed. Its chef and valet gazed superciliously down upon the assembled loungers, but the two gentlemen who alighted and gave their names as Martin Harrison and his secretary, Mr. Spooner, were to all appearances "jest ordinary folks."

Glory was housecleaning on the day of Harrison's coming, and, in neatly patched gingham and dust-protected crown, she came nearer seeming the typical mountain woman than she had for many days before. Her fresh beauty was hard to eclipse, but she was less presentable than she wished to be when her husband's great patron saw her for the first time and contrasted her with such women as his own daughter.

When she heard the names, without previous warning, a sort of panic possessed her and for once she became tongue-tied and awkward, so that after the first, Helen Merriwell stepped into the breach and did the talking.

"My name is Martin Harrison," said the great man with simple cordiality. "I thought John Spurrier lived here—but I seem to be mistaken."

"He—he does live here," stammered Glory, catching the swiftly stifled amazement of the magnate's disapproving eyes.

"Here?" He put the question blankly as if only politeness prevented a greater vehemence of surprise. "But I expected to find a bachelor establishment. There are ladies here."

Glory fell back a step as if in retreat under attack. If this statement were true, Spurrier had never acknowledged her to the employer with whom his relations were intimately close. In her own eyes, she stood as one who had lost caste and been repudiated—and all self-confidence abandoned her, giving way to trepidation.

Harrison stood bewilderedly looking at this country girl who had turned tremulous and pale, and Helen Merriwell stepped forward.

"Then you didn't know that Mr. Spurrier was married?" she smilingly inquired.

The money baron transferred his glance to her as his shadowed face lightened into

relief. This young woman had the poise and ease of his own world, which made communication facile. If Spurrier had not been candid with him, at all events he had, perhaps, not unclassed himself. The other was presumably a local servant of whom he need think no more.

"Mr. Spurrier," he answered easily, "had not mentioned his marriage probably because our recent correspondence has all related to business. However, I hold it unhandsome of him not to have done so." He paused, then added deferentially: "Of course, I am better prepared now to felicitate him—since I have seen you."

But Helen Merriwell laughed and laid a hand on Glory's shoulder.

"You do me too much honor, Mr. Harrison," she assured him. "*This* is Mrs. Spurrier."

The financier's ingrained politeness for once failed him. It was not for long, but in the breached instant he stiffened arrogantly as his eyes went back to Glory, and betrayed themselves in half-contemptuous hostility. The lieutenant whom he had chosen as his own successor in the world of lofty affairs had not only deceived him but had thrown himself wantonly away upon a stammering daughter of illiterates!

Martin Harrison bowed again, but this time with a precise formality.

"I didn't notify Mr. Spurrier of my coming, since I felt sure I would find him here," he explained briefly, directing himself pointedly to Helen Merriwell. "I am on my way south, so now I'll defer seeing him until another time—unless you expect him back shortly?"

Helen turned inquiringly to Glory and Glory shook her head. The episode, confirming her own anxieties, had unnerved her steadfast courage into collapse. She even slid back into the rough-hewn vernacular that had been so completely banished from her lips and custom.

"I ain't got ther power ter say," she faltered, "when he'll git back. He's goin' ter Frankfort first."

"I'll write to him there," said the capitalist.

Harrison departed with the stiff dignity of an affronted sachem, and Helen Merriwell, looking after him, smiled with amusement for the incident which she so well understood, until she turned and saw Glory

The girl had wilted back against the wall and stood there as if she had been stricken. Her great, violet eyes were brimming with the spirit of tragedy and held the despair of one who has blithely returned home—to find his house in ruin and ashes.

Glory stole away to her own room, escaping the embrace of sympathetic arms, as soon as she could. "He's done denied me ter his friends," she told herself wildly. "He dast'n't acknowledge me ter fine folks!"

Then through the first, torpid misery of hurt pride, crept a more terrifying thought. Spurrier had been practically engaged to this man's daughter. He had been diverted from his purpose by motives of pity, and now that Harrison knew, he might be ruined—probably would be ruined. If so disaster would come to him because of her—and at last she rose from the chair where she had dropped down, collapsed, with a light of new resolution in her eyes.

"If that's all I'm good for," she declared tempestuously, "he's got to be rid of me."

CHAPTER XVII.

During the sitting of the legislature John Spurrier was a sporadic onlooker, and his agents were as vigilant as sentinels in a danger zone. The last day of the term drew to a wintry sunset, and when the clock registered midnight the body would stand automatically adjourned until gavel fall two years hence.

Spurrier, outwardly a picture of serenity, but inwardly tensed for the final issue, sat in the visitors' gallery of the Senate chamber. The charter upon which all his hopes hung as upon a fulcrum was all but in his grasp. Seemingly the enemy slept on. Seemingly in those last tired hours the authorizing bill would slip through to passage with the frictionless ease of well-oiled bearings.

The needed men had been won over. Carping critics might prate, here and there, of ugly things that savored of bribery, but that was academic. The fact of victory remained. Methods may be questionable. Results are not, and Spurrier was interested in results. The enemy had been caught napping, and the victory would be his. Certainly he had been as fair as the foe. What now remained was a perfunctory confirmation by the Senate, and in these final wearied hours it would slip through easily in the general wind-up of uncontested affairs.

Spurrier had not slept for two days—or had slept little. When this ended he would go to his bed and lie there in sunken hours of restoration the clock around—and after that back to Glory. Already he carried in his pocket the brief message which he meant to put upon the wires to Harrison, at the moment of midnight and victory. Characteristically it read: "Complete victory. Spurrier."

Now as the clerk droned through the mass of unfinished matters that burdened the schedule, the clock stood at ten in the evening, and a spirit of disordered peevishness proclaimed itself in the chamber. Seats were vacated. Voices rose in unparliamentary clamor.

From the desk where a mountain senator sat in touseled disarray, a flask was drawn and tipped with scant regard to senatorial dignity. Then the chairman of the committee which had the steering of Spurrier's affairs arose and handed a paper to the clerk.

Spurrier himself leaned forward with an expectant intake of breath, and Wharton, who sat at his side, chewed nervously on an unlighted cigar. Sleepy reporters yawned at the press tables as the clerk droned out his sing-song, "An act entitled an act conferring charter rights upon the Hemlock Pipe Line Company of Kentucky."

The reading of the measure seemed devoid of interest or attention. It went forward in confusion, yet when it was ended the mountain man, who had taken the swig out of his flask, came slowly to his feet.

"Mr. President of the Senate," he drawled, "I want to address a few incongruvial remarks to the senators in regards to this here proposed measure."

With a sudden sense of premonition Spurrier found himself sitting electrically upright.

That man was one who, so far as he knew, had held no vassalage to American Oil and Gas. He was a pygmy among small men, and as he drooled on he seemed to urge no pertinent objection. Yet before he had been five minutes on his feet his intent was clear and his success assured.

Out of the hands of their recognized lieutenants A. O. and G. had taken the matter of serving them. Into the hands of this obscure and loutish Solon, they had thrust their commission, and now with the clock creeping forward toward adjournment, he meant to talk the charter measure to death by holding the floor until the opportunity for a vote had elapsed.

Tediously and inanely he meandered along, and no one knew what he was talking about. In extravagant metaphor and florid simile he indulged himself—and the clock worked industriously, an ally not to be unduly hurried.

"In God's name," exclaimed Spurrier, "isn't there any way to shut that fool up? He's ruining us. Get some of our leaders up here, Wharton. We've got to stop him."

"How," demanded Wharton with a fallen jaw.

"I don't give a damn how! Kill him—buy him. Anything!"

"It's too late," responded Wharton grimly. "He's already bought. We've walked into their trap. We might as well go home."

Spurrier sent for his whip, who had come to the end of his resourcefulness and shook a dejected head.

"If you want to shoot him down as he stands there," said the gentleman testily, "I dare say it would stop him short. I know no other way. He is having resort to the senatorial privilege of filibuster. We have let them slip up on us."

Held by a deadly fascination, Spurrier sank back into his seat. The clock over the speaker's desk traveled once, almost twice around the dial, and yet that nasal voice wandered on in an endless stream of grotesque bombast—talking the charter to a slow death by strangulation.

Then when it seemed to him that he could no longer restrain himself, Spurrier heard the gavel fall. It was a light sound, but it crashed on his brain with thunders of destruction.

"Gentlemen," declared the presiding officer. "The Senate stands adjourned, sine die."

Had John Spurrier gone to see the "witch woman" when Mosebury advised it, his course from that point on would have brought him to a different ending.

Spurrier, in looking back on that night, could never quite remember it with consecutive distinctness. Gaps of forgetfulness were fitfully shot through with disconnected scraps of recollection. When events began to marshal themselves into orderly sequence, the windowpanes of his hotel room were turning a dirty gray with

the coming of dawn, and he was sitting in a straight-backed chair. His bed had not been touched. Back of that lay a chaotic sense of irremediable disaster and despair.

At last he caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror, and that picture of disheveled wildness startled him and brought him back to realization.

Then self-contempt swept in on him. He had been called a man of iron nerve; a plunger who never turned a hair under reversals of fortune—and now he stood looking through the glass at a broken gambler with frenzied eyes. It was such a face as one might see in the circle before the Casino at Monte Carlo—the place of suicides.

The man who had seemed to come from nowhere and who had talked last night with such destructive volubility, had been a pure shyster. To be outwitted by such a clown carried the sting of chagrin, quite apart from the material disaster. Yet into his disordered thoughts came the realization that the senator had been only a puppet. His actuating wires had been pulled by the fingers of A. O. and G. and the men who sat as overlords of A. O. and G. were only shysters of a greater caliber. The men whom he, himself, served were no better. Compared to this backwoods statesman he, John Spurrier, was as a smooth and sophisticated confidence man paralleled with a pickpocket. Ethically, they were cut from the same cloth, though to differing patterns.

He had been engaged in a tawdry game, for all its gilding of rich prospects, but in the face of defeat a man cannot change his colors.

Had he been able to undertake this fight as his own man and choose his own methods —changing them as he grew in stature—had he been able to reap his own profit and give the native *his* profit, there might have been a man's zest in the game.

Now, less than ever, could he speak open truth to these simple friends who had trusted him. Now he must fight out a damaged campaign to the end along the lines to which he stood committed.

Perhaps if he could avert total ruin, he might yet have opportunity to reclaim the confidence of these Esaus who had traded for a mess of pottage. Certainly they had nothing to hope for from the myrmidons of Trabue.

That Spurrier should think at all, just now, of the people back of Hemlock Mountain, was strange. Perhaps it could not have happened had not this moment of stripped illusions laid bare to his inner eye the spots of moral decay in himself.

It did happen, and in that fact lay the quickened seed of regeneration.

John Spurrier forced his shoulders back into military erectness. He compelled his lips into the stiff and counterfeited curvature of a smile.

Not only had every resource he could muster gone into the scrapped enterprise, leaving him worse than bankrupt, but through him Martin Harrison had been led into sinking fortunes.

Harrison would, in all likelihood, be less bitter about the money loss, than the thought of the triumphant smile on Trabue's thin lips, but it was quite in the cards that, with his contempt for failure, he would wash his hands of Spurrier.

That, of course, spelled ruin. The exhibition skater had gone through the thin ice.

But when Spurrier went down to the hotel dining room at breakfast time a cold bath and a superhuman exertion of will power had transformed him. His bearing was a nice blending of the debonair and the dignified.

To no eye of observation was there any trace of collapse or reversal. He seemed the man who demanded the best from life and who got it.

Later he wrote a telegram to Harrison. It was not the thing he had expected to say, yet in it went no whine of despair:

> Have suffered a temporary reversal.

Those were the words that the capitalist read when the message, after being decoded from its cipher, was laid on his desk.

Harrison, recently returned from his Southern trip, thought truculently of that near-by office in which Trabue was also receiving telegraphic information, and he writhed in the wormwood of chagrin.

The curtness of his response scorched the wires:

> Explain in person if you can. Otherwise we separate.

So John Spurrier packed his bag and caught the first train for the mountains. He must say good-by to Glory, and he believed that in that clarifying air he could brace himself for the encounter that awaited him in New York.

As he turned into the yard of his own house he paused, and something about his heart tightened until it unsteadied him. Here alone, in all the world, he had known what home meant, and in his heart and veins rose an intoxicating tumult like that of wine.

Back of that emotional wave though lurked a misery of self-reproach. Glory had made the magic of his brief happiness, but there was a background, too, of kindly souls and a ruggedly genuine welcome. He had learned to know these people and to revise his first, false views of them. In them dwelt the stout honesty and real strength of oak and hickory—and he had striven to plunder them. His victory was to have been built on their loss and to himself, in that mood, he stood unpleasantly and nakedly revealed as one who had advised them falsely and taken advantage of their blind acceptance of his counsel.

"I am not much better than a Judas," he reflected; then bitterly added: "A Judas who has been robbed of his pieces of silver in the end!"

Then he had reached the door and flung it open and Glory was in his arms, but unaccountably she had burst into a tempest of tears.

Before he had had time to speak of the necessity that called him East she was telling of the visit of Martin Harrison and his indignant departure.

Despite his all-consuming happiness of a moment before, Spurrier drew away, chilled by that announcement, and Glory read in his eyes a momentary agony of apprehension.

"In God's name," he demanded in a numbed voice, "why didn't you write me about that?"

"He said," responded the wife simply, "that *he* would write to you at Frankfort. I thought you knew."

"But I should have thought you'd have spoken of his coming and going—like that."

Her head came up with a brief little flash of hurt pride.

"You hadn't ever told him about me," she said, though without accusation. "I didn't want to talk to you about it until you were ready to suggest it. It might have seemed—disloyal."

Spurrier again braced his shoulders. After a moment he took her in his arms.

"Glory, my sweetheart, I've been playing a game for big stakes. I've had to do some things I didn't relish. I've got to do another now. I'm summoned to Harrison's office in New York, at once—and I have no choice."

Glory drew away and looked with challenging directness into his eyes.

"I suppose—you'll go alone?"

"I must. Business affairs are at a crisis, and I need a free hand. But, God granting me a safe return, it's to be our last separation. I swear that. I am always wretched without you."

That same afternoon Spurrier found time to visit the "witch woman." It had dawned upon him since that night in the Senate chamber that, after all, Sim Colby might have been the least dangerous of his enemies, and the thought made him inquisitive.

The old crone made her magic with abundant grotesquerie, but at its end she peered shrewdly into his eyes, and said:

"I reads hyar in ther omens thet mebby ye comes too late."

Spurrier smiled grimly. He thought that himself.

"I dis'arns," went on the hag portentously, "thet a blind man unperiled ye mightily—a blind man thet plays a fiddle—but thars others besides him thet dwells fur away an' holds a mighty power of wealth."

A blind man! Spurrier's remembrance flashed back to the visit of blind Joe Givins and the papers incautiously left on his table. Yet if he was genuinely blind they could have meant nothing to him—and if he was not genuinely blind it was hard to conceive of human nerves enduring without wincing that test of the gun thrust against the temple.

Spurrier rose and paid his fee. Had he seen her in time, this warning would have averted disaster. Now it was something of a post-mortem.

At the door of Martin Harrison's office several days later Spurrier drew back his shoulders and braced himself. It was impossible to ignore the fact that he stood on the brink of total ruin; that his sole hope lay in persuading his principal that with more time and more money he would yet be able to succeed—and Harrison was as plastic to persuasion as a brass Buddha.

But he had steeled himself for the interview—and now he turned the knob and swung back the mahogany door.

Spurrier was familiar enough with the atmosphere of that office to read the signs correctly. The hushed air of nervousness that hung over it now betokened a chief in a mood which no one sought to stir to further irritation.

Always in the past Spurrier had been deferentially ushered into a private office and treated as the future chief. Now, as though he were already a disinherited heir, he was left in the general waiting room, and he was left there for an hour. That cooling of the heels, he recognized as a warning of the cold reception to come—and an augury of ruin.

At last he was called in, but he went with an unruffled demeanor which hid from the principal's eye how near to breaking his inward confidence was strained.

"I wired you to come at once," began Harrison curtly, and Spurrier smiled as he nodded.

"I came at once, sir, except that I hadn't been home for some time, and it was necessary to make a stop there."

"Home," Martin's brows lifted a trifle. "You mean the mountains."

"Certainly—for the time being, I'm located there."

"We may as well be honest with each other," asserted the magnate. "I consider that under the circumstances you behaved with serious discourtesy and without candor." For a casual moment his glance dwelt on the portrait of Vivian which stood on his table.

"I disagree with you, sir. I preferred relating the full circumstances, which were unusual, when there was an opportunity to do so in person. I was kept there by your interests as well as my own."

"That recital," said the older man dryly, "is your concern. Now that I know the facts I find myself uninterested in the details. You have chosen your way. The question is whether we can travel it together."

"And I presume that the first point of that question demands a full report upon the business operations."

"So far as I can see, they have collapsed."

"They have by no means collapsed."

Suddenly the wrath that had been smoldering in Harrison's eyes burst into tempest. He brought his clenched fist down upon his desk until inkwells and accessories rattled.

This man's moments of equinox were terrifying to those who must bow to his will—and his will held sway over broad horizons. If John Spurrier had not been intrepid he must have collapsed under the withering violence of the passion that rained on him.

"Before God," cried Harrison, pacing his floor like a lion that lashes itself to frenzy, "you undertook to avenge me on Trabue. You have drawn on me with carte-blanche liberties and spent fortunes like a prodigal! You have assured me that you had, at all times, the situation well in hand. Then, through some damned blunder, you failed. Let the money loss slide. Damn the money! I'm the laughingstock of the business world. I'm delivered over to Trabue's enjoyment as a boob who failed. I'm an absurdity, and you're responsible!"

"When you've finished, sir," said Spurrier quietly, "I shall endeavor to show you that none of those things have happened—that our failure is temporary and that when you undertook this enterprise you were in no impetuous haste as to the time of its accomplishment."

"The legislature doesn't meet for two years," Harrison barked back at him. "That will be two years of preparation for Trabue. Now he's fully warned, where do we get off?"

"At our original point of destination, sir."

The opportunity hound began his argument. His demeanor of unruffled calm and entire confidence began to exercise its persuasive force. Harrison cooled somewhat, but Spurrier was fighting, beneath his pose, as a man who has cramps in deep water fights for his life. These few minutes would determine his fate, and he was totally at the mercy of this single arbiter.

"I have now all the options we need on the far side of Hemlock Mountain," Spurrier summarized at last. "All except one tract which belongs to Bud Hawkins, who is a preacher and a friend of mine. He must have more generous terms, but I will be able to do business with him."

"You talk of the options on the far side of the ridge," Harrison broke in belligerently. "That is the minor field."

"I'll be able to repeat that performance on the near side."

"You will not! Any movement along that line would be only a piling up of warnings. For the present you will give every indication of having abandoned the project."

"That is my idea, sir. I was not speaking of immediate but future activities."

Harrison seated himself, and as the interview stretched Spurrier's nerves stretched with it under the placid surface of his plunger's camouflage. He had, as yet, no way of guessing how the verdict would go, and now the capitalist's face hardened in discouragement. It was a face of merciless inflexibility. The sentence had been prepared in the judge's mind. There remained only its enunciation.

"Nothing is to be gained by mincing my words, Spurrier," declared Spurrier's chief. "We know precisely where you stand."

Harrison extended his hand with its fingers spread and closed it slowly into a clenched fist. "I hold you—there! I can crush you to a pulp of absolute ruin. You know that. The only question is whether I want, or not, to do it."

"And whether, or not, you can afford to do it," amended the other with an audacity that he by no means felt. "You must decide whether you can afford to accept tamely and as a final defeat, a mere reversal, which I—and no one else—can turn into eventual victory."

"I have duly considered that. I had implicit confidence in your abilities. You have struck at my personal feeling for you by a silence that was not frank. You have allied yourself with the mountain people by marriage, and we stand on opposite sides of the line of interest. You have all the while been watched by our enemies, and I regard you as a defeated man. If I choose to cast you aside, you go to the scrap heap. You will never recover."

That was an assertion which there was neither health nor wisdom in contradicting and Spurrier waited. His last card was played.

"And I am going to cast you aside—bankrupt you—ruin you!" blazed out Harrison, "unless you absolutely meet my requirements during a period of probation. That period will engage you in a very different matter. For the present you are through with the Kentucky mountains. The new task will be a difficult one, and it should put you on your metal. It is one that can't be accomplished at all unless you can do it. You have that one chance to retrieve yourself. Take it or leave it."

"What are your terms?"

"You will sail to-morrow for Liverpool. I will give you explicit instructions to-night. Go prepared for an extended stay abroad."

For the first time Spurrier's face paled. For a moment he considered revolt, but he knew his helplessness. Finally he said: "You hold the whip hand, sir."

"Come back," said Harrison, "at five-thirty this afternoon."

Most of the intervening hours Spurrier spent in writing to Glory, tearing up letter after letter while the nervous moisture bedewed his brow. It was so impossible to give her any true or comprehensive explanation of the pressing weight of compulsion. His messages must have the limp of unreason. He was crossing the ocean without her and she would read into it a sort of abandonment that would hurt and wound her. He had taxed everything else in life, and now he was overtaxing her loyalty.

In Berlin John Spurrier passed as a British subject, bearing British passports. That had been part of the careful plan to prevent discovery of what American interests he represented and it had proven effective. He had almost accomplished the difficult task of self-redemption, set him by the man whose confidence he had strained.

Then came the bolt out of heaven. The inconceivable suddenness of war cloud belched and broke, but he would have a chance to finish up before the paralysis cramped bourse and exchange.

England would not come in, and he, the seeming British subject, would have safe conduct out of Germany.

Now he must get back. This would mean the soaring of oil prices, and along new lines the battle must be pitched back there at home, before it was too late.

So Spurrier finished his packing. He was going out onto the streets to watch the upflame of the war spirit and to make railway reservations.

There was a knock at the door and the man opened it. Stiffly erect, stood a squad of military police and stiffly their lieutenant saluted.

"You are Herr John Spurrier?" he inquired.

The man nodded.

"It is, perhaps, in the nature of a formality, which you will be able to arrange," said the officer. "But I am directed to place you under arrest. England is in the war. You are said to be a former soldier."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Over the ragged lands that lay on the "nigh side" of Hemlock Mountain breathed a spirit of excitement and mighty hope. It had been two years since John Spurrier had left the field he had planned to develop, and in those years had come the transition of rebirth.

Along muddy streets the hogs still wallowed, but now they were deeply rutted by the teaming of ponderous oil gear, and one saw young men in pith helmets and pig-skin puttees; keen-faced engineers and oil prospectors drawn in by the challenge of wealth from the far trails of Mexico and the West. One heard the jargon of that single business and the new vocabulary of its devotees. "Wild-catters" following surface indications or hunches were testing and well-driving. Gushers rewarded some and "dry holes" and "dusters" disappointed others. Into the medieval life of hills that had stood age-long unaltered and aloof came the infusion of hot-blooded enterprise, the eager questing after quick and miraculous wealth.

In Lexington and Winchester oil exchanges carried the activity of small bourses. In newspapers a new form of advertisement proclaimed itself.

Oil was king. Oil and its by-product, gasoline, that the armies needed and that the thousands of engines on the earth and in the air so greedily devoured.

But over on the far side of the ridge men only fretted and chafed as yet. They had the oil under their feet, but for it there was no outlet. Like a land without a seaport, they looked over at neighbors growing rich while they themselves still "hurted fer needcessities."

American Oil and Gas had locked them in while it milked the other cow. It had its needed charters for piping both fields, but a man who was either dead or somewhere across the world held the way barred in a stalemate of controlled rights of way.

Glory thought less about the wonderful things that were going forward than did others about her, because she had a broken heart. No letters came from Spurrier, and the faith that she struggled to hold high like a banner nailed to the masthead of her life, hung drooping. In the end her colors had been struck.

If John Spurrier returned in search of her now she would go into hiding from him, but it was most unlikely that he would return. He had married her on impulse and under a pressure of excitement. He had loved her passionately—but not with a strong enough fidelity to hold him true—and now she believed he had turned back again to his old idols. She was repudiated, and she ought to hate him with the bitterness of her mountain blood, yet in her heart's core, though she would never forgive him and never return to him, she knew that she still loved him and would always love him.

She no longer feared that she would have hampered him in the society of his more finished world. She had visited Helen Merriwell and had come to know that other world for herself. She found that the gentle blood in her veins could claim its own rights and respond graciously. Hers had been a submerged aristocracy, but it had come out of its chrysalis, bright-winged.

Then one day something happened that turned Glory's little personal world upside down and brought a readjustment of all its ideas.

Sim Colby owned a little patch of land beside his homestead place, over across the mountain, and he was among those who became rich. He was not so rich as local repute declared him, but rich enough to set stirring the avarice of an erstwhile friend, who owned no land at all.

So ex-Private Severance came over to the deserter's house with a scheme conceived in envy and born of greed. He was bent on blackmail.

When he first arrived, the talk ran along general lines, because "Blind Joe," the fiddler, was at the house, and the real object of the visit was confidential. Blind Joe had also been an oil beneficiary, and he and Sim Colby had become partners in a fashion. During that relationship Blind Joe had told Sim some things that he told few others.

But when Joe left and the pipes were lighted Severance settled himself in a back-tilted chair and gazed reflectively at the crest of the timber line.

"You an' me's been partners fer a right long spell, Bud Grant, ain't we?"

Colby started. The use of that discarded name brought back the past with its ghosts of fear. He had almost forgotten that once he had been Bud Grant, and a deserter from the army. It was all part of a bygone and walled-in long ago. Though they were quite

alone he looked furtively about him and spoke in a lowered voice:

"Don't call me by thet name. Thar ain't no man but you knows erbout—what I used ter be."

"Thet's what I've been studyin' erbout. Nobody else but me."

Severance sat silent for a while after that announcement, but there was a meaning smile on his lips, and Colby paled a shade whiter.

"I reckon I kin trust ye, I always hev," he declared.

Severance nodded. "I was on guard duty an' I suffered ye ter escape," he went reminiscently on. "I knows thet ye kilt Captain Comyn, an' I've done kept a close mouth all these years. Now ye're a rich man an' I'm a pore one. Hit looks likes ter me ye owes me a debt an' ye'd ought ter do a leetle something fer me."

So that was it! Colby knew that if he yielded at all, this man's avarice and his importunities would feed on themselves increasingly and endlessly. Yet he dared not refuse, so he sought to temporize.

"I reckon thar's right smart jestice in what ye says," he conceded, "but I don't know jest yit how I stands or how much money I'm wuth. Ye'll hev ter give me a leetle time ter find out."

But when Severance mounted his mule and rode away, Sim Colby gave him only a short start and then hurried on foot through the hill tangles by a short cut that would intercept his visitor's course.

He knew that Severance would have to ride through the same gorge in which Sim had waylaid Spurrier, and he meant to get there first, rifle-armed.

It was sunset when, quite unsuspecting of danger, at least for the moment, Severance turned his mule into the gorge. He was felicitating himself, since without an acre of land or a drop of oil he had "declared himself in" on another's wealth. His mule was a laggard in pace, and the rider did not urge him. He was content to amble.

Back of the rock walls of the great cleft, the woods lay hushed and dense in the closing shadows. An owl quavered softly, and the water among the ferns whispered. All else was quiet.

But from just a little way back, a figure hitched forward as it lay belly-down in the "laurel hell." It sighted a rifle and pressed a finger.

The mule snorted and stopped dead with a flirt of ears and tail and with no word, without even a groan, the rider toppled sidewise and slid from the saddle.

The man back in the brush peered out. He noted how still the crumpled figure lay between the feet of the patient, mouse-colored beast, that switched at flies with its tail. It lay twisted almost double with one arm bent beneath its chest.

So Colby crept closer. It would be as well to haul the body back into the tangle where it would not be so soon discovered, and to start the beast along its way with a slap on the flank.

But just as the assassin stooped, Severance's right hand darted out and, as it did so, there was a quick glint of blue steel, and three instantly successive reports.

Colby staggered backward with a sense of betrayal and a horrible realization of physical pain. His rifle dropped from a shattered hand and jets of blood broke out through his rent clothing. Each of those three pistol balls had taken effect at a range so close that he had been powder-burned. He knew he was mortally hurt, and that the other would soon be dead if he was not so already.

Colby began crawling. He was mangled as if by an explosion, but instinct drove him. Twice he fainted and recovered dim consciousness and still dragged himself tediously along.

Glory was alone in her house. Her father, who had been living with her of late, had gone to the county seat overnight.

The young woman sat in silence, and the sewing upon which she had been busied lay in her lap forgotten. In her eyes was the far-away look of one who eats out one's heart in thoughts that can neither be salved nor banished.

Then she heard a faint call. It was hardly more than a gasped whisper, and as she rose, startled, and went to the door she saw striving to reach it a shape of terrible human wreckage.

Sim Colby's clothes were almost torn from him and blood, dried brown, and blood freshly flowing, mingled their ugly smears upon him. His lips were livid and his face gray.

Glory ran to him with a horrified scream. She did not yet recognize him, and he gasped out a plea for whisky.

With the utmost effort of her young strength she got him in, and managed to straighten out the mutilated body with pillows under its head.

But after a little the liquor brought a slight reviving, and he talked in broken and disjointed phrases.

"Hit war Severance," he mumbled. "I fought back—I reckon I kilt him, too."

Glory gazed in bewildered alarm about the house. Brother Bud Hawkins was at Uncle Jimmy Litchfield's place, and she must get medical help, though she feared that the wounded man would be dead before her return.

When she came back with the preacher, who also "healed human bodies some," Colby was still alive but near his passing.

"Ef thar's aught on yore conscience, Sim," said the old preacher gently, "hit's time ter make yore peace with Almighty God, fer ye're goin' ter stand afore him in an hour more."

The dying man looked up, and above the weakness and the suffering that filled his eyes, showed a dominating expression of terror. If ever a human being needed to be shriven he thought it was himself.

They had to bend close to catch his feeble syllables, but he said: "Git papers—write this down."

The preacher obeyed kneeling on the floor, and though the words were few, their utterance required dragging minutes, punctuated with breaks of silence and gasping.

"I kilt Captain Comyn—an' Severance knew erbout hit—Hit warn't John Spurrier—thet did hit——" He broke off there, and the girl closed her hands over her face. "I sought ter kill Spurrier—but I warn't with them—thet attacted him hyar—an' wounded ther woman."

Again a long pause, then: "Blind Joe Givins—only he ain't no blinder than me—read papers hyar—he diskivered thet Spurrier was atter oil rights—he tipped off ther oil folks—he war their spy all ther time—shammin' ter be blind——" There the speaker struggled to breathe and let his head fall back with the utterance incomplete. Five minutes later he was dead.

"Hit don't seem ter me," said Brother Hawkins a short time later, "es ef what he said kin be true. Why ef hit be, John Spurrier was aimin' ter plunder us hyar all ther time! He was counselin' us ter sell out—an' he was buyin'. I kain't believe that."

But Glory had drawn back to the wall of the room and into her eyes had come a new expression. The expression of one who must tear aside a veil and know the truth, and who dreads what that truth may be.

"Brother Hawkins," she declared in a low but fervent voice, "if it's not true, it's a slander that I can't let stand. If it *is* true, I must undo the wrong he's sought to do—if I can. Please wait."

Then she was tearing at the bit of paneling that gave access to the secret cabinet, and poring over papers from a broken and rifled strong box.

There was the uncontrovertible record, clear writ, and at length her pale face came up resolutely.

"I don't understand it all yet," she told the preacher. "But he was buying. He bought everything this side the ridge. He was seeking to influence the legislature, too. I've got to talk to my father."

John Spurrier stepped from the train at Carnettsville into a life that had been revolutionized. At last he had succeeded in leaving his German exile. His own country was in the war but he, with the equipment of a soldier, bore a dishonored name, which would bar him from a commission. Here he found the development of his dreams realized, but by other hands than his own.

Above all, he must see Glory. He had cabled her and written her, so she would be expecting him. Now he gazed about streets through which teemed the new activity.

Here was the thing he had seen in his dreams when he stood on wooded hills and thought in the terms of the future. Here it stood vivid and actual before the eyes that had visioned it.

With a groan he turned into the road homeward on a hired horse. He still meant to fight, and unless the Bud Hawkins property had escaped him, he would still have to be accounted with—but great prizes had slipped away.

At the gate of his house, his heart rose into his throat. The power of his emotion almost stifled him. Never had his love for Glory flickered. Never had he thought or dreamed of anything else or any one else so dearly and so constantly as of her.

He stood at the fence with half-closed eyes for a moment, steadying himself against the surges of upwelling emotion, then, rais-

ing his eyes, he saw that the windows and the door were nailed up. The chimney stood dead and smokeless.

Panic clutched at his throat as with a physical grasp. Before him trooped a hundred associations unaccountably dear. They were all memories of little things, mostly foolish little things that went into the sacred intimacy of his life with Glory.

Now there was no Glory there.

He rode at the best speed left in his tired horse over to old Cappeze's house, and, as he dismounted, saw the lawyer, greatly aged and broken, standing in the door.

One glance at that face confirmed all the fears with which he had been battling. It was a face as stern as those on the frieze of the prophets. In it there was no ghost of the old welcome, no hope of any relenting. This old man saw in him an enemy.

"Where is Glory?" demanded Spurrier as he hurried up to the doorstep, and the other looked accusingly back into his eyes and answered in cold and bitterly clipped syllables.

"Wherever she is, sir, it's her wish to be there alone." Suddenly the old eyes flamed and the old voice rose thin and passionate. "If I burned in hell for it to the end of eternity, I would give you no other word of her."

"She—she is not dead, then?"

"No—but dead to you."

"Mr. Cappeze," said Spurrier steadily, "are you sure that I may not have explanations that may change her view of me?"

"We know," said the lawyer in a voice out of which the passion had passed, but which had the dead quality of an opinion inflexibly solidified: "That since your marriage, you never made her the companion of any hour that was not a backwoods hour. We know that you never told us the truth about yourself or your enterprises—that you came to us as a friend, won our confidence, and sought to exploit us. Your record is one of lies and unfaithfulness, and we have cast you out. That is her decision and with me her wish is sacred."

John Spurrier bowed his head. He had lost her! If that were her final conclusion, he could hardly seek to dissuade her. At least he could lose the final happiness out of his life—from which so much else had already been lost—as a gentleman should lose.

And he knew that however old Cappeze might feel, he would not lie. If he said that was Glory's deliberately formed decision, that statement must be accepted as true.

"I have never loved any one else," said Spurrier slowly. "I shall never love any one else. I have been faithful despite appearances. The rest of your charges are true, and I make no denial. I gambled about as fairly as most men gamble. That is all."

A stiffening pride, made flinty by the old man's hostility, shut into silence some things that Spurrier might have said. He scorned the seeming of whine that might have lain in explanations, even though the explanations should lighten the shadow of his old friend's disapproval. He offered no extenuation and breathed nothing of the changes that had been wrought in himself by the tedious alchemy of time and reflection. There had been opportunity enough for self-analysis over there in an internment camp, and out of its candid thinking had emerged a resolution that, if ever the chance came back, he would regard himself as primarily the agent of the land owners, whose rights came first.

He had begun under the spur of greedy ambition, but changes had been wrought in him by Glory's love.

He was still ambitious, but in a different way. He wanted to salvage something for the equitable beneficiaries. He wanted to stand, not among the predatory millionaires, but to be his own man, with a clean name and solvent.

Before he could attain that condition he must render unto Harrison the things that were Harrison's and wipe out his own tremendous liabilities—but his heart was in the hills.

CHAPTER XIX.

Unless he were tamely to surrender to the despair that beset him, John Spurrier had one other thing to do before he left the hills. He must come to such an agreement with Bud Hawkins as would give him a right of way over that single tract and complete his chain of holdings. Thus fortified the field beyond the ridge would be safe against invasion by his enemies. In the Hawkins property lay the keystone of the arch. With it the position was impregnable. Without it all the rest fell apart like an inarticulated skeleton.

It happened that Spurrier met Hawkins as he went away from the house of Dyke Cappeze, and forcing his own miseries into the background, he sought to become the business man once more. He began with a frank statement of the facts and offered fair and substantial terms of trade.

Both because his affection for the old preacher would have tolerated nothing less and because it would have been folly now to play the cheaper game, he spoke in the terms of generosity.

But to his surprise and discomfiture, Brother Hawkins shook a stubborn head.

"Thar ain't skeercely no power on 'arth, Mr. Spurrier," he declared, "thet could fo'ce me inter doin' no business with ye."

"But, Brother Hawkins," argued the opportunity hound, "you are cutting your own throat. You and I standing together are invincible. Separate, we are lost. I'm almost willing to let you name the terms of agreement—to write the contract for yourself."

"I've done been pore a right long while already," the preacher reminded him as his eyes kindled with the zealot's fire. "Long afore my day Jesus Christ was pore an' ther Apostle Paul, an' other righteous men. I ain't skeered ter go on in likewise ter what I've always done." He paused and laid a kindly hand on the shoulder of the man who offered him wealth.

"I ain't seekin' ter fault ye unduly, John Spurrier. Mebby ye've done follered yore lights—but we don't see with no common eye, ner no mutual disc'arnment. Ye've done misled folk thet swore by ye, ef I sees hit a'right. Now ye offers me wealth, much ther same as Satan offered hit ter Jesus on a high place, an' we kain't trade—no more then what they could trade."

The old preacher's attitude held the trace of kindliness that sought to drape reproof in gentleness and to him, as had been impossible with Cappeze, Spurrier poured out his confidence. At the outset, he confessed, he had deliberately dedicated himself to the development of wealth for himself and his employers, with no thought of others. Later, in a fight between wary capitalists where vigilance had to be met with vigilance, the seal of secrecy had been imperative. Frankness with the mountain men would have been a warning to his enemies. Now, however, his sense of responsibility was awake. Now he wanted to win back his status of confidence in this land where he had known his only home. Now what weight he had left to throw into the scales would be righteously thrown. Even yet he must move with strict, guarded secrecy.

But the old circuit rider shook his head.

"Hit's too late, now, ter rouse faith in me, John," he reiterated. "Albeit I'd love ter credit ye, ef so-be I could. What's come ter pass kain't be washed out with words." He paused before he added the simple edict against which there was no arguing.

"Mebby I mout stand convinced even yit ef I didn't know thet ther devil was urgin' me on with prospects of riches."

One thing remained to him: the pride that should stiffen him in the presence of his accusers and judges. When he went into the eclipse of ruin, at least he would go with unflinching gallantry.

And it was in that mood that Spurrier reached his club in New York and prepared himself for the ordeal of the next day's interview.

He had wired Harrison of his coming, but not of his hopelessness, and when his telephone jangled and he heard the voice of the financier, he recognized in it an undercurrent of exasperation, which carried omen of a difficult interview.

"That you, Spurrier? This is Harrison. Be at my office at eleven to-morrow morning. Perhaps you can construe certain riddles."

"Of what nature, sir?"

"Of a nature that won't bear full discussion over the wire. We have had an anonymous letter from some mysterious person who claims to come with the situation in a sling. It may be a crank whom we'll have to throw out—or some one we dare not ignore. At all events, it's up to you to dispose of him. He's in your province. If you fail, we lose out and, as I said once before, you go to the scrap heap."

Spurrier hung up the phone and sat in a nerveless trepidation which was new and foreign to his nature. This interview of to-morrow morning would call for the tallest bluffing he had ever attempted, and the chances would, perhaps, turn on hair-trigger elements of personal force.

He must depend on his coolness, audacity, and adroitness to win a decision, and, except by guesswork, he could not hope to formulate in advance the terrain of battle or the

nature of counter-attack with which he must meet his adversary.

That evening he strolled along Broadway and found himself yielding to a dangerous and whimsical mood. He wondered how many other men outwardly as self-assured and prosperous as himself were covertly confessing suicide as one of to-morrow's probabilities.

Over Longacre Square the incandescent billboards flamed and flared. The darning-wool kitten disported itself with mechanical abandon. The woman who advertised a well-known corset and the man who exploited a brand of underwear brilliantly made and unmade their toilets far above the sidewalk level. Motors shrieked and droned and crowds drifted.

Before a moving-picture theater, his introspective eye was momentarily challenged by a gaudy three-sheet. The poster proclaimed a popular screen star in a "fight fuller of punch than that of 'The Wreckers.'"

What caused Spurrier to pause was the composition of the picture—and the mental comparison which it evoked. A man crouched behind a heavy table, overthrown for a barricade—as he had once done.

Fallen enemies lay on the floor of a crude Western cabin. Others still stood and fought with flashing guns and faces "registering" desperation, frenzy, and maniac fury. The hero only, though alone and outnumbered, was grimly calm. The stress of that inferno had not interfered with the theatric pose of head and shoulders—the grace and effect of gesture that was conveyed in the two hands wielding two smoking pistols.

Spurrier smiled. It occurred to him that had a director stood by while he himself had knelt behind a table he would have bawled out many amendments which fact had overlooked. Apparently he and his attackers had, by these exacting standards of art, missed the drama of the situation.

Over him swept a fresh flood of memory, and it brought a cold and nervous dampness to his temples. Again he saw Glory rising at the broken window with a pigeon to release—and a life to sacrifice, if need be. On her face had been no theatric expression which would have warranted a close-up.

Spurrier hastened on, turning into a side street where he could put the glare at his back and find a more mercifully dark way.

He was seeing, instead of dark house fronts, the tops of pine trees etched against an afterglow, and Glory standing silhouetted against a hilltop. Above the grind of the elevated and the traffic, he was hearing her voice in thrushlike song, happy because he loved her.

The agony of loss overwhelmed him, and he actually longed, as for a better thing, for that moment to come back when behind an overturned table he had endured the suspense which death had promised to end in an instant filled and paid for with revenge.

Then through his disturbed brain once more flashed lines of verse

"I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last!
I should hate that Death bandaged my eyes and forebore,
And bade me creep past."

At all events he would, in the figurative sense, die fighting to-morrow. He knew his mistakes now. If he lived on he hoped to atone for them, but if he died he would go out without a whine.

And if he must die, there was one way that seemed preferable to others. The army would have none of him, as an officer, because he stood besmirched of honor. But he knew the stern temper of the mountaineers. They would rise in unanimous response to the call of arms. He could go with them, not with any insignia on his collar, but marching shoulder against shoulder into that red hell of Flanders and France, where a man might baptize himself, shrive himself, and die. And in dying they would leave a record behind them!

"What do you make of it?" demanded Harrison, when Spurrier, secure in his seeming of undaunted assurance, arrived at his office and the response came smilingly: "I think it means a bluff."

"Read that," snapped the financier as he flung a letter across his desk.

Spurrier took the sheet of paper and read in a hand, evidently disguised:

You find yourself in a cul-de-sac. I hold the key to a way out. My terms are determined. I shall be at your office at noon, Tuesday. We will do business then, or not at all.

"I repeat," said Spurrier, "that this seems to me a brass-bound bluff. I make only the request that I be permitted to talk with this brigand alone to sound him out with no interference and shape my policy. I'm not at all frightened."

Harrison answered snappily:

"I agree to that—but if you fail you fail finally."

Down along the creekbeds back of Hemlock Mountain young Jimmy Litchfield, a son of old Uncle Jimmy, had been teaming with a well-boring outfit and his wagon had bogged down in deep mud. He had failed to extricate himself so he tramped three hard, steep miles and telephoned for an extra team. While he awaited deliverance he found himself irked and, to while away the time, set his drill down haphazard and began to bore.

It would be some hours before help arrived, and when he had worked a while he had forgotten all about help.

His drill had struck through soft gravel to an oil pool lying close to the surface, and the black tide gushed crazily.

Young Jimmy sat back watching the dark jet that he had no means of stemming or containing, and through his simple soul flowed all the intoxication of triumph.

He was the discoverer of a new—and palpably a rich field!

Hereafter oil men would speak of the Snake Creek field as copper men spoke of Anaconda or gold men of the Yukon.

And that night word went by wire to the opportunity hound that the "fur" side was to the "nigh" side as gold is to silver.

Spurrier sat cross-legged in Harrison's office and their discussion had come to its end. Now, he had only to await the unknown person who was to arrive at noon bearing alleged terms, a person who claimed to be armed for battle if battle were needed.

At Harrison's left and right sat his favored lieutenants, but Spurrier himself occupied a chair a little bit apart, relegated to a zone of probation.

Then a rap sounded on the door, and Spurrier smiled with a ghost of triumph as he noted that he alone of the small group did not start at the signal. For all their great caliber and standing, these men were keyed to expectancy and exasperated nervousness.

The clerk who appeared made his announcement with the calculated evenness of routine: "A lady is waiting. She says her name doesn't matter. She has an appointment for twelve."

"A lady!" exclaimed Harrison in amazement. "My God, do we have to fight this thing out with a woman?"

The tableau of astonishment held, until Spurrier broke it:

"What matter personalities to us?" he blandly inquired. "We are interested in facts."

The chief lifted his hand and gave curt direction. "Show her in."

Then through the door came a woman whose beauty would have arrested attention in any gathering. Just now what these men, rising grudgingly from their chairs, noted first, was the self-possession, the poise, and the convincing evidence of good breeding and competency which characterized her.

She was elegantly but plainly dressed, and her manner conveyed a self-assurance in nowise flustered by the prospect of impending storm.

No one there, save Spurrier, recognized her, for to Martin Harrison carrying the one disapproving impression of a mountain girl in patched gingham, the transformation was complete.

And as for Spurrier himself after coming to his feet, he stood as a man might be expected to stand if a specter of death had suddenly materialized before him.

For the one time in his life all the assumption of boldness, worn for other eyes, fell away from him and left him nakedly and starkly dumfounded. He presented the pale and distressed aspect of a whipped prize fighter, reeling groggily against the ropes, and defenseless against attack.

Harrison gave him one contemptuous glance and remarked brutally:

"Madam, this gentleman was to talk with you, but he seems scarcely able to conduct any affair of moment."

Glory was looking at the broken man, too, and into her splendid eyes stole a pity that had tenderness back of it.

Old memories came in potent waves, and she closed her lids for a moment as though against a painful glare, but with quick recovered she spoke.

"It is imperative, gentlemen, that I have a few words first—and alone—with Mr. Spurrier."

"If you insist, but——" Harrison's shoulders stiffened. "But we do not guarantee that we shall abide by his declarations."

"I do insist—and I think you will find that it is I who am in the position to dictate terms."

Harrison gave a sharply imperative gesture toward the door through which the others filed out, followed by the chief himself, leaving the two alone.

Then John Spurrier rose, and supported himself by hands pressed upon the table top. He stood unsteadily at first and failed in his effort to speak. Then, with difficulty, he straightened and swept his two hands out in a gesture of surrender.

"I'm through," he said. "I thought there was still one fight left in me—but I can't fight you."

She did not answer and, after a little, with a slight regaining of his self-command, he went on again:

"Glory! What a name and what a fulfillment! You have always been Glory to me."

Out of his eyes slowly went the apathy of despair and another look of even stronger feeling preëmpted its place: a look of worship and adoration.

"I didn't know," admitted Glory softly, "that I was to meet you here. I didn't know that the fight was to be between us."

"You have ruined me," he answered. "I'm a sinking ship now, and those rats out there will leave me—but it's worth ruin to see you again. I want you to take this message with you and remember it. All my life I've gambled hard and fought hard. Now I fail hard. I lost you and deserved to lose you, but I've always loved you and always shall."

Her eyes grew stern, repressing the tenderness and pity that sought to hold them soft.

"You abandoned me," she said. "You sought to plunder my people. I took up their fight, and I shall win it."

Spurrier came gropingly forward and fell on his knees, clutching at her skirt.

"I saw only the game, dear heart," he confessed, "never the unfairness. I'm ready to pay the price. Ruin me—but in God's name, believe that I love you."

Her hand came out waveringly at that, and for a moment rested on his head with a little gesture of tenderness.

"I thought I hated you," she said. "I tried to hate you. I've dedicated myself to my people and their rights—but if you trust me enough, call them in and let me talk with them."

"Trust you enough!" he exclaimed passionately, then he caught her to him, and, when he let her go, he stood again transformed and revivified into the man he had seemed before she appeared in the doorway. It was as though the touch of her lips had given him the fire from which he rose phœnixlike.

With an unhesitant step he went to the door and opened it, and the men who had gone out trooped back and ranged themselves again about the table.

"Mr. Spurrier did all in your interests that a man could do," said Glory. "He failed to secure your charter and he failed to secure the one tract that serves as the key. I am a mountain woman seeking only to protect my people. I hold that tract as trustee for Bud Hawkins. I mean to do business, but only at a fair price. It's for you to determine whether I deal with you or your competitors."

A look of consternation spread over the faces of the lesser men, but Harrison inquired with a grim smile:

"Madam, haven't I seen you somewhere before to-day?"

"Once before—down in the hills."

"Then you are this man's wife! Was this dramatic incident prearranged between you?"

She raised an imperative hand, and her voice admitted no question of sincerity.

"Make no such mistake. Mr. Spurrier knew nothing of this. He was loyal enough—to you. From him I never even learned the nature of his business. Without his knowledge *I* was loyal to my people."

Then for ten minutes she talked clearly, forcefully, and with the ring of indubitable sincerity giving fire to voice and manner. She told of the fight she and her father had made to keep heart in mountain folk, enraged by what they believed to be the betrayal by a man they had trusted and attacked by every means of coercion at the disposal of American Oil and Gas.

She told of small local reservoirs, mysteriously burned by unknown incendiaries; of neighborhood pipe lines cut until they spilled out their wealth again into the earth; of how she herself had walked these lines at night, watching against sabotage.

As she talked they saw her growing in the belief of these men whose wrath had been, in the words of old Cappeze, "Like that of the she wolf robbed a second time of her whelps." They recognized the faith

that had commissioned her to speak as trustee, and to act with carte-blanche powers.

Harrison and his subordinates were not susceptible men, easily swayed by a dramatic circumstance, so they cross-examined and heckled her with shrewd and tripping inquiries, until she reminded them that she had not come as a supplicant, but to lay before them terms, which they would, at their peril decline to accept.

The realization was strong in them that she had spoken only the truth when she declared that she held the key. When they were convinced that she realized, in full, the strength of her position, they had no wish to antagonize longer.

The group of financiers drew apart, but after a brief consultation Harrison came forward and offered his hand.

"Mrs. Spurrier," he announced crisply. "We have gone too far to draw back. After all, I think you come rather as a rescue party than an attacker. Spurrier, you have married a damned brilliant woman."

Glory accepted the extended hand of peace, and Harrison, with a jerk of his head to the door, led his followers out, leaving them alone again.

Then Glory held out her arms, and into the bright depths of her eyes flashed the old bewitching merriment.

"Thar's a lavish of things I needs ter know, Jack," she said. "You've got to l'arn 'em all ter me."

THE END.

THE TYRANNY OF HABIT

THERE are few of us to whom some habit does not cling, which we follow mechanically, but could not give any logical reason for so doing. Great numbers of people who are not superstitious never spill salt accidentally without afterward furtively throwing a pinch of salt over the left shoulder, to avert bad luck. In their childhood most of them probably have read about this old superstition or been told by superstitious people, that to spill salt means bad luck, which might be headed off by throwing a pinch over the left shoulder. They acquire a habit of doing so, which remains with them when they grow older and know better.

In a group of boys, who are daily companions, some boy may have a faculty for twitching one of his facial muscles and exercises this faculty frequently to make the others laugh. It develops into a habit, and when the boy becomes a man, the habit continues, though the man does not realize it.

Busy men of affairs occasionally acquire a habit of always crossing the street at the same spot when they leave their homes. Even when this spot becomes an inconvenient one at which to cross, through traffic changes, they continue crossing at the same place. Those in cities who were against the daylight saving measure at first, were dominated by the old system of keeping time, which had been a habit all their lives.

The increasing changes and growing complexity of conditions brought about as civilization progresses play havoc now with many old habits, which appeared to have been confirmed. They do not seem, however, to have any appreciable effect on mental peculiarities that have become a habit with some people, such as the habit of always disagreeing with the opinions of others and disputing every point, logical or illogical, which others make. There is an old story of an uneducated Irishman who was empaneled on a jury during a court trial, and who, when the jury retired to decide on a verdict, took off his shoes and, laying them on a desk, delivered himself as follows:

"I'm not in the habit of agreein' wid iverybody. Yez see these shoes? Well, I might agree wid wan or two of yez, but I'll eat thim before I agree wid twelve of yez."

In the United States Senate there seem to be many senators of this type. Among the senators who wrangled over the League of Nations covenant and kindred questions so long, there must have been a big percentage who, like the Irish juror, have a habit of disagreeing. They might agree with the conclusions of one or two, but to agree with a large enough number to pass a majority vote on the questions before Congress might be a violation of their personal traditions which they could not countenance.

The Time Thief

By Roy W. Hinds

Author of "A Dead Man Tells A Tale," Etc.

Rarely are men mixed up in prison. That is, it is seldom the records are confused. But Hinds tells of an instance when two men got their jail numbers, lost their identities, and then the extraordinary sequel.

THEY at once lost their identity, and became mere numbered things—like box cars. They were catalogued on the prison books, with their cell numbers, as a hardware merchant lists various sizes of bolts and the shelves on which they can be found when wanted.

There wasn't any likelihood of Charlie being wanted, except for prison duties, for a matter of eighteen years, and it was doubtful whether Joe ever would be wanted. Charlie was laden with a sentence of twenty-five years; with good time off, he could do it in eighteen. Joe had less to worry about. He never would shiver for fear of losing his good time. He had life—a "natural"—to do; and all his good time lay behind.

Both were tramps. Both were young—not more than twenty-five.

Joe had been arrested after another vagabond was found dead in a "jungle" where the two "cooked up," and afterward applied themselves industriously to a black bottle. Joe bore the marks of conflict. His face was bruised and lacerated. So was the face of the dead man. It was murder in drunken rage. Joe tearfully confessed it. They *could* have hanged Joe, but his youth saved him. The jury and the judge were very sympathetic. Their souls expanded with that warm suffusion which comes with the consciousness of charity. They let him down easily.

He didn't have to die—then. All Joe had to do was to make himself snug on the shady side of four stout walls, linger to a ripe old age, and then die. They gave him merely—*life!*

It was different with Charlie. He had "come in" from another part of the State. Highway robbery was his crime and twenty-five years his time. He didn't have that soft repose of soul which comes to a man who knows his life is done. He had yet to struggle with the world.

For eighteen years he would be locked in a combat of wits with his keepers. They would watch him ceaselessly to see that he toed every scratch of prison rules. They would for eighteen years stand over him with a figurative cutlass—ready to slash thirty days, or six months, or perhaps a year, from that precious strip of seven years' good time. Then, many, many years away—oh! so many—he would be thrust into the world again. He had a desperate yearning for that world, because it was yet within his grasp. His eighteen years would be a restless torture, with his eye ever upon the distant mark. He would constantly think of the time when he would renew the bitter, and yet sweet, struggle for existence; the time when he would traverse wide stretches of the earth, and eat where he could, and sleep where he could, and warm where he could—and die where he could. He was yet a part of the world. His mind was part of the world. His viewpoint was worldly. He chafed with his beloved world almost at his finger tips, and yet eighteen years away!

But Joe—well, Joe's eyes were not fastened on any far-away light. Joe's eyes, dulled by the blow, saw only the things about him. He had nothing in the future to concern him. His only task was to make each hour as pleasant as possible, for the sake of that hour itself. If his heart stopped beating forty years hence, very well; he would glide as easily as he could to that point. If his blood ceased to flow to-morrow, still very well. The future was no part of his thoughts.

Joe was dead—as dead as the silent convicts who slept beneath the markerless mounds in the prison cemetery just over the north wall; the convicts who had come there

to do life, and had done it; and the convicts who had come to do years, and had done life. Joe was dead. There was yet to be the formality of winding a sheet tightly about him. The chaplain had yet to breathe a hurried prayer. They had yet to crush him down with a ton of earth—but he was dead; as serene and peaceful as the dead. Joe's life had been one of chance always. He wasn't the man to dispute things when fate turned against him. He had gotten much out of the world to which he wasn't entitled. Things had gone turn-about with him now, and there was no righting them. Thus he took his gaze forever off the future.

Charlie and Joe came to prison the same day and on the same train, but from different towns. They met on the train when their custodians struck up a friendship. The officers were in a hurry to get their tasks done, for a trip to the prison always meant a night in the gay town near by. They left Charlie and Joe as soon as they had taken the handcuffs off them inside the prison and deposited their commitment papers.

Charlie and Joe had not a relative or a friend, other than a tramp or two, outside those walls. There never would be a whisper raised in their behalf in all the wide, wide world. Neither Charlie nor Joe would ever receive a letter. They had been dismissed as abruptly from the world as though they were marched to the rim of the earth and pushed off into space. No one knew that better than Charlie and Joe.

Neither one of them protested against the mistake which the commitment clerk made a few minutes after they were delivered to the prison, because neither one of them knew the mistake had been made.

Charlie, who was to do twenty-five years, was entered on the records as Joe, and Joe, who was to do life, became the man who was to do twenty-five years!

On the top of each man's prison record sheet were set down his name, age and family history. Charlie was numbered "2896" and Joe "2897." Then the commitment clerk came from behind his desk and pinned a set of numbers on each man's breast. That is where he made the error. He pinned Joe's number on Charlie's breast and Charlie's number on Joe's breast.

They were led into a camera room and photographed. When they were brought back the clerk set down their physical descriptions, as called off by the men who were taking them. He set down Joe's description on Charlie's blank and Charlie's description on Joe's blank. He was going now by the numbers on their breasts. Later Charlie's pictures were filed with Joe's papers and Joe's pictures with Charlie's papers.

A few years later, when finger print and Bertillon systems were installed in the prison, the mistake was carried to a full conclusion. The men were called in by their numbers, and had no way of knowing that Joe had become Charlie and Charlie become Joe. This was a prison of the old type, where names were lost by strict rules, and Charlie and Joe never were called by anything but their numbers.

Two wardens came and went during the eighteen years. The third, Warden Newcomb, came in the seventeenth year.

All those years Charlie, known by Joe's number of 2897, and Joe, known by Charlie's number of 2896, were cellmates. For something like sixty-six hundred evenings Charlie and Joe talked in undertones. Something like a thousand Sundays and holidays they spent talking in undertones. At the end of eighteen years, their voices were mere husky whispers; tones from which life had fled. Year by year they aged—aged quickly. The ruggedness of youth slipped away. Their bodies took on a bent leanness. Their cheeks sunk; their eyes sunk; their lips drew into hard lines; their gaits dropped into the shuffling step of the "inside;" their eyes fixed themselves on the ground, and rarely lifted. The pallor of the inside spread over their faces like a mask. Their hair thinned and whitened.

At the end of eighteen years Charlie and Joe were old men, yet neither was forty-five.

There was one spot brighter than usual in each long week. Each Friday evening, on returning to their cell from the shops, they found a copy of the little prison paper. This weekly sheet contained several columns of prison gossip—and a few columns, clipped from the papers of the near-by city, on the things which were happening in the great world outside. In turn they read the paper, then hurled it aside. There was nothing to break the dreadful monotony then until the next Friday.

During those years, Charlie and Joe

learned much of each other's past. Joe had nothing to talk of but the past, and Charlie was too considerate to talk of the future. Joe learned all the details of Charlie's crime; his period in jail, his trial and conviction. He knew the name of the judge who had sentenced Charlie. He knew the name of the prosecutor. He knew how each man looked physically. He knew the name of the lawyer who had defended Charlie. Men occupying the same cell eighteen years talk in great detail and learn much more than two men do of each other on the outside.

All these things Joe knew about Charlie, and Charlie knew quite as much about Joe.

Joe worked in the tailor shop and Charlie paid the penalty of his crime by laboring in the shoe shop. They had no chance to talk except to each other in the cell at night.

On this particular morning Charlie was nervous. The great clock in the shoe shop pointed to the hour of nine. Charlie knew that he was due to step into the world that day, and that prisoners were invariably released at ten o'clock. It was time they came for him to "dress him out." He thought it strange that he had been set at work that day. Prisoners usually were taken out of the line marching from breakfast on the morning of their discharge and held until nine o'clock in a spare cell.

He had bid good-by to Joe in their cell that morning. They had marched out, Joe behind Charlie. In that order they also marched from the mess hall—marched with arms folded and eyes to the front, according to rule. Charlie hadn't seen a guard pluck Joe from the line. Charlie didn't know that Joe was not at work in the tailor shop. Charlie ddin't know that Joe at that very moment was being dressed out.

At nine-thirty Charlie raised his hand, as a signal to Guard Reynolds that he wished to speak with him. Reynolds beckoned him to the platform on which he sat as keeper of the shoe shop.

"I think, sir, that I'm due to go out this morning," Charlie said.

The guard studied him curiously. "What's the trouble," he inquired; "are you sick?"

"No, sir; but I think I'm due to go out."

"I wish you were," said Reynolds. He was a kindly man.

"I have served eighteen years and forty days—and that's the time the rule book says it takes to put up twenty-five years, sir," Charlie informed him quietly.

The curious gaze of the guard deepened. "I thought you were doing life," he suggested.

"Who, me—sir?" Charlie asked in surprise.

"You're on my list as a lifer," Reynolds announced, and in a moment he had shown Charlie the number 2897 on the shoe-shop books. The number was beside *Joe's* name; but Charlie knew that he himself wore that number stamped on his shirt bosom, and that he had been known by that number for eighteen years.

"But that's my cellmate's name, sir!"

Now Guard Reynolds knew prisoners very well. He had been witness to the collapse of more than one mind during his ten years in that prison. He knew that eighteen years inside is a terrible load—and it wouldn't be surprising if a man broke under it. He acted accordingly.

"We'll take a walk," he said soothingly. He blew upon his whistle and soon another guard came to take his post. Guard Reynolds led the mystified Charlie straight to Doctor Eccles, the prison physician.

"There is nothing wrong with this man," the physician announced. For fifteen minutes he had examined Charlie critically.

Whereupon the matter was laid before Warden Newcomb. Charlie was so plainly sane and so intensely serious that the officials did not by any means take the matter lightly.

Joe, who was very, very near to freedom, found that a hitch had occurred in these strange events. Joe was dressed for the liberty he was about to steal, but he wasn't led to the front gate. He was led into the warden's office.

Now Joe had had nearly three hours in which to turn over in his mind this peculiar twist of affairs. At seven o'clock he was pulled from the line marching from the mess hall to the gate leading to the industrial building. He had been well schooled in the art of saying nothing when a guard chose to lead him around. In a few minutes he sat, wondering, on the edge of a bunk in a cell which he knew was reserved for the detention of prisoners about to be discharged.

"Well," the guard said to him, "you've put up quite a stretch, haven't you, old man?"

"Yes, sir," replied Joe. "Eighteen years."

"And you never lost a minute of good time. That's a good record."

"Yes, sir."

"You've earned your liberty, I guess."

"Yes, sir."

"And I guess you'll steer clear of places like this from now on." The guard smiled. "Won't you?"

"Yes, sir."

The guard departed. Joe stared in bewilderment at the strong bars in the cell door. He listened to the fading footsteps of the guard. And then full comprehension came.

With comprehension there came a rush of the life which had been dead for eighteen years. In a moment he was transformed from a mere atom of numb flesh and bone into a living, breathing man. Once more he heard the call of the earth's widest stretches. He had been plucked from the grave by a miracle. His whole body tingled. He felt the new life surging through his veins. He had awakened from a dream of death and found himself intensely alive. He saw himself roaming at large again. His eyes ached from the brilliance of the vision which rose in that cell. He saw cities and towns and fields and streams and mountains and sunshine and soft nights under the stars. He felt the soft rain of summer on his cheek. He felt the cold of winter in his marrow—but it was a delightful cold; freezing but delightful—for it was the cold of *freedom!*

Never had freedom risen in such charming array, even when he felt it slipping from him eighteen years ago.

Not for an instant did he think of throwing away the chance. Not for an instant did he falter in his purpose to gain it.

And neither did he think of robbing Charlie of his freedom. It dawned on him that the prison officials, somewhere, somehow, had made a mistake. He hoped and prayed that the mistake, whatever it was, would not be discovered until he was out and far away from this living tomb. He knew the officials could not hold Charlie, even though they had discharged Joe through a mistake. Charlie might have to serve a day or so longer—but he knew Charlie would be more than willing, eager, to do that if he understood how things were. He had no doubt that Charlie would get his freedom shortly. It wouldn't take Charlie long to convince the warden that he was due to go out. They couldn't deny Charlie his freedom. It wasn't any of Charlie's business that Joe had been let out. He was sorry he and Charlie hadn't anticipated this turn of affairs, so they could have arranged to meet somewhere in the glorious outside.

Thus the first hour passed. The second hour was filled with alarms. Joe assured himself that the guard had made a mistake in numbers. He was sure that the guard should have taken 2897 instead of 2896 from the line. If it were merely a mistake of the guard, it would be discovered when they came to dress him out. The storekeeper would have his written order to dress out 2897. He would know that he had the wrong man the instant he saw the numbers on Joe's prison clothing.

At nine o'clock he was quite sure he never would be able to carry the deception to a happy outcome. He paced the cell frantically; clasping and unclasping his hands. Terror of being again hurled back into the abyss sickened him. The joy of having clutched one slender thread of freedom revived him.

At quarter after nine a wave of confidence came over him—a wave of determination to carry matters to the utmost. Somehow he felt it were more than a mistake on the part of a guard. He tried to remember all the details of his imprisonment eighteen years ago, but he couldn't figure out where a mistake had been made then.

But he had regained his confidence. He felt buoyant. Something told him he had a tight grip on freedom. They'd have to beat him away from it—club him away from it. He'd never relinquish his hold voluntarily.

And then the guard came for him. He was taken to the storeroom and dressed out, without a hint of suspicion that he wasn't the right man. This swelled his confidence. The mistake was no trivial thing. If he could just get out and away!

The storekeeper shook his hand in farewell and wished him luck. For the first time in eighteen years Joe heard himself called by a name instead of a number. He trembled. The storekeeper laughed. He had seen more than one prisoner tremble on the brink of freedom. But he didn't know that Joe was trembling because of the name he had called him.

The storekeeper had called him by *Charlie's* name!

They thought he *was* Charlie. It was not a mistake of numbers. It was a mistake of men—and Joe felt that freedom surely was very near.

He felt that he was going to win. He

was nervous when he entered the warden's office, but he wasn't alarmed at that. He knew that all prisoners were nervous when the gates to the world were about to be opened for them. He had heard of them fainting. He had heard of men who went through fifteen years without a tremor—only to collapse just outside the gates. He had heard of men who had to be assisted to the car line. He didn't fear detection because of his nervousness.

He didn't know but what the visit to the warden's office was part of the routine in discharging a prisoner. He went in bravely. He didn't know there was any question.

He didn't know it until he saw Charlie, in prison uniform, sitting between Warden Newcomb and Doctor Eccles. His heart sank quickly, and rose just as quickly. Joe was a brave man and he had determined to *fight!*

Joe was thrust into a chair. A guard stood behind him. For an instant his eyes met the eyes of Charlie. Charlie gazed in wonder. Joe gazed brazenly.

"What is your name?" Warden Newcomb asked Joe. He studied his face searchingly.

For answer, Joe pronounced Charlie's name. He gazed respectfully, but fearlessly, upon the warden.

"Are you sure of that?" the warden queried.

"Why, of course, I'm sure, sir," Joe replied. He simulated surprise very cleverly.

"This man," the warden announced, jerking his thumb toward Charlie, "says that's his name."

Joe surveyed Charlie curiously. "I don't understand that, sir," he said, and smiled.

The record sheets of the two prisoners had been brought by this time and lay on the table before Warden Newcomb. There were photographs, their commitments, the Bertillon sheets. Of course, these papers did not help to untangle things, for the mistake had been in booking Charlie under Joe's name and Joe under Charlie's.

According to all evidence yielded by the records, Joe was the man due to step outside that morning.

"It is very strange," the warden commented.

Then he turned upon Charlie. Charlie, sensing the danger of losing the liberty upon which his sad eyes had been turned for eighteen years, answered truthfully, but somewhat jerkily. He didn't know, and no one in that room knew, how the mistake had been made—and the mystery was just as dark as ever two hours later.

Whereupon Joe was led to a cell in the west cell house and Charlie was led to his cell in the east cell house. All communication between the two men thus was severed. The warden wasn't sure but what a conspiracy existed. A full investigation was instituted.

At intervals during the week the men were questioned singly. Joe talked as glibly of Charlie's crime as did Charlie himself. He went into details—and he had the facts. He talked as intimately of Charlie's affairs, as though he were Charlie, as did Charlie himself, and the warden was as much in doubt as ever.

The warden felt that if a mistake hadn't been made, a conspiracy existed; and that if a conspiracy did not exist, a mistake had been made. There was nothing to do but run the thing to earth.

The commitment sheets, made out in the towns from which the men had been sent, contained no information other than their names, crimes, and sentences. They had been booked at the county jails simply under their names and ages. At the prison, they had given their family histories correctly, but their physical descriptions had been switched through the error of pinning Joe's number on Charlie and Charlie's number on Joe. The number on Joe corresponded to the number on Charlie's papers, and vice versa.

One by one the warden exhausted every recourse. The judge who had sentenced Joe was dead—so was the judge who had sentenced Charlie. At last the lawyer who had defended Charlie and the prosecutor who had prosecuted Joe were found and brought to the prison.

The two men stood in the warden's office and Charlie was brought in. He looked carefully from one to the other.

"I don't know that man, sir," said Charlie, pointing to Joe's prosecutor, "but this other man was my lawyer."

Charlie was led away and Joe was brought in. The moment he saw the man who had prosecuted him, Joe knew he must not recognize him. He saw that the other man was fat and red-faced. Instantly it dawned on him that Charlie's lawyer was fat and red-faced. He had heard Charlie revile him as "the fat, red-faced bluffer who double-

crossed me." The man's hair was gray now, and he looked older, but Joe had to take a chance. He said, pointing to the stranger:

"That's Mr. McNamara, my lawyer."

Neither of the lawyers would venture a positive identification! Charlie's lawyer first identified Charlie as Charlie—and then Joe as Charlie! Then he withdrew both identifications! Eighteen years had elapsed.

A few scattered jurors from each man's jury and one old keeper from each man's jail were brought to the prison. Charlie rightly identified all his jurors and his keeper. Poor Charlie! He couldn't recall any of their names, but he never would forget their faces. He had watched that jury too many days ever to forget them!

Charlie was led out and Joe was brought in. Joe recognized some of his own jurors, and he guessed at once that the strangers were Charlie's jurors. He pointed to Charlie's jurors and to Charlie's keeper.

"Those men sat on my jury," Joe averred.

Warden Newcomb smiled. He pointed to Charlie's old keeper. "Was that man on your jury?" he asked.

Joe scented a pitfall. He studied the man thoughtfully. "I'm not so certain about him," he lied, "but I've seen him somewhere before." His brain was working nimbly. "Maybe," he said evasively, "I saw him around the courtroom—or maybe at the jail over there."

He was taken away. He had slipped a little—but not enough to settle the case, or anywhere near settle it. Charlie hadn't called any names. Joe hadn't called any names, and he only had shown himself a trifle hazy as to one man's face. Joe was doing nicely.

None of the jurors or the keepers would positively identify either man. One of Charlie's jurors even said he thought Joe was the man he had helped convict!

Joe, swept high upon a glorious crest of hope, lived with a burning craze for freedom. He was sure Charlie would get his freedom, even after he himself was released. Once outside, Joe would take measures to right things for Charlie—and they would have to free Charlie. If only he could talk with Charlie! Joe couldn't quit now. A thing dead for eighteen years had come to life with a force he was unable to resist, even if he had wished to resist; and he was swept on and on—his passion for freedom swelling with every hour and his terror of failure swelling with every hour. Not for a moment did he think Charlie wouldn't get out later. If he could but see him!

In the other cell house languished Charlie.

One morning, after an investigation of two weeks had left Warden Newcomb in a sharp state of nerves, Charlie and Joe found themselves sitting at a large table in Doctor Eccles' office. They were facing the same way and were far enough apart so they could not touch each other, had they wished to give a signal. On the opposite side of the table sat Warden Newcomb and Doctor Eccles. A cordon of guards surrounded the room.

Before the doctor and the two prisoners lay pads of paper and lead pencils. The warden was curious, but not very confident.

Joe and Charlie had been commanded not to look at each other. The guards were posted in such manner as to enforce this order.

"One of you men," said Doctor Eccles softly, "is here under a sentence of life. The other one is here under a sentence of twenty-five years. We are about to conduct a test that will prove conclusively which man is the lifer."

Charlie fidgeted in his chair. So did Joe. He was wise enough to feign agitation when Charlie was agitated, and calmness when Charlie was calm. It was natural then for each to be agitated. The doctor and warden watched them closely. So did the guards.

Doctor Eccles resumed: "It is only fair to the man who really should go out to state that we do not believe a conspiracy exists between you. We think that only one man is playing a game of deception. I don't know which man that is—but I will know soon."

Charlie again fidgeted. So did Joe. Charlie smiled faintly. Joe, who thought it a good time to smile, also smiled faintly.

"It is also only fair," the physician went on, "to give you some idea of the test. We believe you to be men about equal in intelligence. Both of you have served the same time to a day. This is to be a test of memory. The man who exhibits the best memory is the man due to go out. We know that life sentences impair memory. It is only fair to tell you that, so you can have an equal chance. As it stands now, to us, both of you are due to go out, and both of you are due to serve life sentences. Each of you looks the same to us. It is up

to the man who really should go out to prove his identity. We are going to write a question on the top of six sheets of paper; a different question one at a time. We will show the questions to each man in turn. He will then write his answers. On those answers depends the question of liberty or imprisonment."

Half an hour later Doctor Eccles rose from the table and pointed to Charlie. The old convict trembled. The doctor announced:

"There is the man who should be discharged. He is the man who has served his sentence of twenty-five years."

The doctor thereupon turned to Joe. Charlie had collapsed in sheer joy. Joe sat, crushed but calm.

"You are the lifer," the doctor told Joe.

It turned out that he was right. Next day Joe, under the belief that Charlie had been discharged, confessed that he himself was Joe. Whereupon Charlie *was* discharged.

Once more the future became a blank to Joe as his gaze turned back solely to the things about him.

"I don't understand yet how you did that, doc," Warden Newcomb commented. "They came out at about a tie on those questions."

"That's where we fooled them," the prison physician confided. "It wasn't in the number of questions they answered that the solution lay. It was in the *nature* of the questions they answered!"

The warden's face wore a puzzled frown. "I don't see——"

"It's this way," the doctor explained. "These six questions were asked: Who were the presidents of the last eighteen years? Who were the wardens of this prison the last eighteen years? Who were the governors of this State the last eighteen years? What was the date of the fire in the mess hall? Who is the mayor of New York? Who are three men mentioned prominently for warden of this prison if Governor Tracey is defeated for reëlection in the fall? Those were the six questions.

"One man named the presidents correctly. He fell down on the name of one warden. He named four of the five governors correctly. He couldn't remember the date of the fire in the mess hall; he knew the month —that was all. He named the mayor of New York. He could name only one man mentioned for the wardenship.

"The other man couldn't recall Taft's first name. He named all the wardens of this prison for the last eighteen years. He could remember only two governors. He knew the exact date of the fire in the mess hall. He didn't know who is the mayor of New York. But he named three men who are being mentioned in the papers for the wardenship here."

"Well?" the warden demanded, as the doctor hesitated.

"One prisoner," said the physician, "was wrapped up in the outside. A man who expects some day to get out keeps in close touch with the world. He does it unconsciously. The things he reads of the outside sink deeper. The other man, with faint hope of ever getting out, centers his life inside. He does it without intent, but just as surely as the other man keeps his mind on the world. To the lifer, the fire in the mess hall was a thing always to be remembered, because to him it was the most exciting thing in years. Also, the question of who is to be the next warden is highly important to him. To the other man, it makes no difference—but he had absorbed other things; the things of *his* world, the outside.

"Of course," Doctor Eccles added, "the test wasn't infallible. The best it could do was to give us a working basis. It placed the men in different positions. We felt sure of the impostor, and it only remained for us to get it out of him—which was easy when *he* felt sure that we had him."

The warden meditated. Then he said: "This psychological business is great, but I'll bet that you lost sight of one big thing in this case."

"What was that?"

"Why, the gameness of this man Joe! That fellow fought with all there was in him for his precious freedom. A man can't be blamed for that. There was a mistake somewhere inside the prison—we're sure of that —and Joe, with life to do, can't be blamed for fighting for his very life. Ah! but there's the making of a man in a fellow who fights like that!" The warden added: "I find that he's doing life for killing another tramp in a fight. It was more of an accident than anything else. He's served eighteen years —the equivalent of a twenty-five year sentence. I'm going to see what I can do for him up at the governor's office. A parole—maybe a pardon, eh?"

"I'm with you on that!" the prison physician seconded.

Right of Way

By H. H. Knibbs

CORRALLED in the sooty roundhouse the steel-ribbed titan stands,
Blind, inanimate, biding the touch of his master's hands;
The sun draws down to the sky line, the sudden switch lights gleam,
And the titan rolls from the inner gloom in a swelter of singing steam.

Clunk, Clank over the switch points the sullen monster glides,
To the stately lift of the rising rods that shimmer along its sides,
And coupler locks into coupler; the plaints of the air valve cease;
A green star glows in the open block as the shuddering brakes release.

From the dusk of the slumbering desert comes the lean coyote's cry;
Boot heels crunch on the cinders and a lantern swings on high;
A white shaft tunnels the darkness gilding the iron trail:
Zoom! Zoom! bellows the titan; and *Way for the Desert Mail!*

Dying down to a dot of red the lights of the town recede,
As power is loosed by a steady hand to a purring streak of speed,
And a song runs over the outlands, arrogant, bold, sublime!
I run my race with the sun, the stars, and the changeless pace of Time!

Zoom! Zoom! Zoom! for a siding and a cattle trail flits by,
A whip-lash flicker of dusty road in the titan's steady eye,
A road that ends at the high corral where the loaded stock cars wait;
Zoom! Zoom! abrupt is the titan's scorn for the haulers of stock and freight.

Zoom! Zoom! To a rhythm faster the shuttling side rods play,
Till the driver treads are strips of steel close wed to the rigid way;
The flanges snarl as they bite the curve; the clutching brake shoes whine;
Then the heaving headlight finds the straight of the streaking silver line.

Far from the iron highway, a cowboy riding herd,
Softly sings to the cattle; turns with a muttered word,
As the distant drone of the titan's voice hushes his easy rhyme;
I run my race with the sun, the stars, and the changeless pace of Time!

"Save your hoss for the hills ahead," is the cowboy's placid song,
While his clear eyes follow the twinkling train as the titan speeds along;
He grins as the tail lights die in space and a cloudless moon appears,
His free heart tuned to his pony's pace he sings to the shuffling steers.

And, "He's bustin' right into to-morrow, bronc; just splittin' the night in two;
I reckon he's got the right of way, but that's nothin' on me and you;
Oh, he'll make his time and we'll take our time and plenty of room to roam,
So it's save your hoss for the hills ahead and mebbe you'll make it home."

And these are the singers the outlands know, each with his work in hand,
In the lurching cab of the Desert Mail; in saddle and grazing land;
One who sings to the midnight herd, breathing his simple creed,
And one who hurtles through cloven space, singing the song of speed.

Murder Will Out

By Charles Somerville

Author of "Angel Face," "The Magic Wig," Etc.

Every now and then at the close of the magazine we like to print a tale that will startle and stimulate the mind of the reader, so that he will carry an enduring impression of it. Does this story fill the bill?

THE district attorney for many years in an Eastern metropolis of this country, my handsome, stately, silver-haired friend, had frequently told me fascinatingly of strange cases from his inexhaustible lore on the subject of crimes and criminals. But none to match in weirdness that which follows.

He felt himself that the unearthliness of it must severely tax credulity, for he thought necessary to preface his story in this manner:

"I hold no theory myself in the matter. You can say for yourself when you have heard the facts—and, mind you, they are facts—whether Martin Cowper was brought to justice for the murder of John Harrington merely through the agency of an amazing accident or through that which would make the instrument of his undoing infinitely more strange—indeed, awe-inspiring. For it would mean that a hand rose literally from the grave to offer the clew which led to his detection. Or, to put it in another way, that the interposition of a soul from spiritland, a direct interposition, surely, consciously made, effected the exposure and punishment of an almost inconceivably villainous criminal. And that this soul was that of the murdered man himself."

The old lawyer sank far into the huge leather chair in his library, and the short, green flames from the reddening sea coal in the big fireplace lighted fully his strong, broad-browed, thoughtful countenance.

"For myself," he continued, "my life has long been sternly bound by realism, materialism. I have given—to my regret now that my hairs are whitened, my years many—only brief and vague speculation to the subject of spiritualism—the possibility, probability, or actuality of communication between the living and the dead. But we know of men of great learning, keenest intellects, men of great renown—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the late W. T. Stead, a foremost journalist, William James, the great American psychologist, to name only a few—whose researches, experiments, and observations have caused them to be most favorably disposed toward credibility of the phenomena. They have reported in several cases absolute conviction of authentic messages transmitted between the quick and the dead. In some instances, men of their intellectual status have openly and firmly espoused belief in the existence of spiritism. For myself, therefore, I feel the subject is not one to be lightly passed off with a shaft of ridicule or a superficial exclamation of incredulity. What such men found worthy of study, thought, and research is at least worthy of any other man's respectful consideration.

"However, my friend, I am not offering these facts by way of a brief for this faith, but simply because the solution of the Cowper-Harrington murder mystery came about in the uncanniest manner known to all my long experience with human tragedies."

Here then is the old lawyer's story:

Rollickingly happy, waving his sombrero, shouting and laughing, young Jack Harrington sent his horse at a mad gallop down the rough pathway to the threshold of the cabin beside a mountain stream in an Alaskan wilderness. In less than a year he had realized his fondest dream of acquiring a fortune that would enable him to marry Rose Leighton back in his home city of the East. He was now at the end of the return drive of twenty-five miles, the distance from the nearest town, with forty thousand dollars in gold pieces and notes tucked in his money belt.

Behind him, smilingly but quietly demeanored, riding his horse at a careful, easy jaunt down the pathway, came Harrington's partner, Martin Cowper. In his belt also was forty thousand dollars.

The total sum of eighty thousand dollars the young men had been paid as the outright purchase price for a gold spur some ten miles away from their lonely camp that had been discovered by Harrington, college-trained in mining engineering and mineralogy. The spur was off a big gold lead owned by an important company of Eastern capitalists, but it was wholly detached. There had been no question of the complete title of Harrington and Cowper to their find. The corporation had promptly tested the spur and named a price which Harrington by scientific test and estimate adjudged fair.

Very different from the gay, abandonedly happy thoughts of Jack Harrington were those of his lank, black-browed partner, as he rode up to the cabin behind him. Cowper had just come to the decision that this night he would murder Harrington. Back East fully a year ago he had laid the plan. It will be readily seen, therefore, that it was not merely for Jack's share of the eighty thousand dollars that Cowper had resolved to do the killing. From their school-days Cowper had nursed a rancorous envy of Harrington who was everything desirable that Cowper was not—good looking, talented, popular, witty, fortunate, college-trained. And when immediately on his return from college, Harrington had come debonairly to Cowper to announce that Rose Leighton had avowed her love for him and promised to marry him, a deadly fury of hatred of Harrington had obsessed the ungainly, dour Cowper.

He began in that very hour to plan Harrington's murder. It is to be seen that he plotted with diabolical, appalling ingenuity, calculating every step, certain that he had evolved a scheme of most complete revenge from which by its cunning he would escape all consequences, even suspicion of the hideous crime.

While Harrington was at college, Cowper had grubbed and toiled as a clerk. But he had saved money. Harrington, he knew, would need money before he could take Rose Leighton to the altar. He had been sent to college only by the straining of his father's slender purse.

As he expected, Harrington eagerly accepted the offer he made to finance them in a hunt for gold in Alaska. Newspapers of that time teemed with accounts of vast wealth being discovered there. Harrington was to contribute his scientific training as against Cowper's cash.

It was a part of his consummate scheme of murder and revenge that it should be Harrington who would find the gold—earn for him, Cowper, the wealth that would enable him, after he had killed Harrington, to eventually appear as an acceptable suitor for Rose's hand. He hugged to his heart the perfection of the plan by which he would rob the unsuspecting object of his envy and hatred of fortune, wife and life!

In greatest apparent good-fellowship, wholly sincere on the part of genial Jack Harrington, they had split a bottle of champagne in the town's hotel after the payment of the eighty thousand dollars to them, Cowper quietly urging upon Jack the largest share of the sparkling wine.

They loaded their saddlebags with what food delicacies were procurable in the mining town, and Jack insisted on adding a few more quarts of champagne.

Back in their cabin, he bowed to the enlarged photograph of Rose Leighton framed and hanging above his bunk on the rough, log wall. He made a formal speech to her imaginary presence, extending on bended knee the money belt with its bulging pockets to his lady fair. He fashioned a chef's cap of paper which he made Martin wear in preparing what he insisted must be styled "the banquet." He appointed himself "the cabaret show," and with a battered guitar, glee songs and old favorites, Jack, exercising strenuous fingers and a lusty voice, came near to realizing his gay pretension.

If Jack's boyish outbursts of merriment stirred to Cowper's memory the curly haired, laughing lad who befriended him when he was somehow disliked and outcast among his playmates in the old schooldays, he did not permit it to affect the resolution locked in his heart to kill John Harrington that night. But it served his purpose now to apparently "come out of his shell," to join with what small grace he could in the festivities. His main contribution was laughing with seeming heartiness at Jack's antics. He even asked Harrington to outline his plans for his wedding to Rose, now that a snug fortune would enable him to marry her in the very near future. When Jack protested

that while it was the subject uppermost in his mind, yet it would be "rubbing it in" to dwell on his own future happiness to Martin in view of Martin's unfortunate love for Rose, Cowper spoke manfully and generously:

"It is the luck of life, old boy," he said. "How in the world could any one blame you because you are what you are? And it's my hard luck to be the sort of a dull, lanky chap I am. Down in my heart, Jack, of course, I never had any hope of making Rose love me. I knew it couldn't be. I am man enough to face life, such as it is for me. With this money I can probably make more—I seem to have a fair business head. And with a comfortable fortune I suppose I can get some good plain girl to be a good wife to me. I won't be an old grouch about it anyway, take my word for it. I'm only worried, Jack, that in marrying Rose, you may not have the good sense to forget about me. There'd be no use in spoiling the happiness ahead of you that way. And don't forget that you have been my best friend. If I can make you and Rose happy by showing you the way to get this money, I am getting a good deal of fun out of it myself."

Jack, ordinarily circumspect in the use of alcoholic drinks, had, nevertheless, thrown aside restraint on this occasion, the happy ending of his long, lonely exile from his sweetheart's side.

"Cowp!" he cried in fervent admiration, "Cowp, you good guy, that was damn' fine friendly talk. That was sure-enough man talk."

He filled Martin's glass and then his own.

"And you've done every little thing on this jaunt of ours to prove that you mean it. Martin Cowper, just between us, old pal, let's touch a glass to Rose!"

Cowper was immediately on his feet and, standing, they clinked their glasses, Jack Harrington's honest eyes regarding his partner with a square look of fine friendship, Cowper smiling, but with his deeply set black eyes smoldering under the concealment of their heavy brows.

When they set their glasses down, Harrington refilled them rapidly.

"In this hour of our great, magnificent, splendid, gorgeous, stupendous all to the hulla-balloola success," he cried, "Cowp, old socks, we'll drink to each other. Zowie and Tigah!"

Again the glasses clinked and Jack, flinging his glass so that it struck against the wall with a crash, shouting uproariously, seized the lanky Cowper and danced him wildly around the room.

That was the climax of the "festivities." Cowper became the staid partner again, and advised that it were best they sought sleep, for there would be the task of loading their effects on the mules next day, and it was highly advisable they get an early start in order that they might not have to run the risk of night travel in their journey to the railroad, laden as they would be with a fortune in cash. This journey would not mean a return to the mining town. It was thirty miles in another direction they must travel to connect with the railroad for the East.

"Yes," Jack agreed. "Always the long head on you, Cowp. I kind of wondered, though, why you asked for cash to-day—why you didn't put the money straight through to the East by way of the banks."

"I thought of it, but there's always the chance of hitches, you know, red tape, and I—well, Jack, I couldn't believe the deal was real until I had the cash right in my hands."

"I get you," laughed Harrington. "Same here. Only I didn't suspect there was that much of the kid left in you."

Jack immediately prepared for bed. He flung his richly laden money belt over his saddle hanging on the wall, whipped off his boots and other clothing, stretched his healthy, muscular young body mightily, got into his pajamas, and with a good-night smile at the picture of Rose Leighton, climbed into his bunk. After a little while, he looked over toward Cowper moving fully clothed about the cabin, and observed drowsily:

"How about you, there? Better turn in yourself."

"I will in a minute, you can gamble, and be darned glad to hit the old hay," said Cowper easily. "Just want to stack these dishes ready for washing in the morning, take a look at the mules and horses, and then I'll call it a day."

"I didn't think I'd ever be ready for sleep to-night with so much excitement and happiness stirring," smiled Harrington, "but I guess—the old wine—is——" He didn't trouble to finish the sentence. His eyes drooped. He was promptly asleep. The wine, the fatigue of the day's long horse-

back journey, made his slumber profound. He was heedless of the lamplight falling on his upturned face. His deep, regular breathing was soundless.

II.

A momentary glance Cowper turned from his intended victim to the picture of Rose Leighton above Harrington's cot. The pretty face did not plead with him for the life of her helpless, handsome lover. It only further hardened Cowper's deadly malice.

He looked again at Harrington, carefully studying the entire supine figure, noting accurately that Harrington in his hasty preparations for sleep had only fumbled at fastening the buttons of his pajama coat. It had parted, and the chest of the sleeping man was bared.

Cowper arose carefully, silently. From its leather scabbard he drew a knife. The lamplight shone on the long, slender steel blade.

The only sign of weakness Cowper showed was that he next extinguished the lamp. He could not murder in the light. But the exact position of Harrington was vividly photographed in his brain. He moved quickly, drew the dagger well above his head as he bent over the sleeping man, then drove it straight and hard into the heart of his best friend.

The force of the blow brought a faint, choking moan from the treacherously stricken boy's lips. That was all.

Cowper had to use brusque muscular force to draw the weapon free. Then he crept back to the table and relighted the lamp.

The amazingly heartless slayer's nerves were steel against the physical and mental reaction commonly following the high tension at which such a crime is committed. No drowsiness or inertness seized upon mind and body, as so frequently happens, there being, indeed, cases of record where takers of human life have been discovered soundly asleep near the bodies of their victims.

Cowper immediately went about taking the other measures contemplated in his hideous program, measures his atrocious mind had endlessly weighed and considered in the plot of whose perfection he felt so sure.

The first of these, of course, was to cleanse his hands in water heated over the oil stove where recently he had prepared the "banquet" for himself and Harrington.

Then he seated himself at the table, refilled a fountain pen—Jack's property—tested the run of the ink and the stroke of the point with an absolutely steady hand.

Next, he began poring over a packet of letters. They were in the handwriting of the dead Harrington—letters written from college to Cowper. After that he passed through the pages of a diary which Harrington had faithfully kept from the day they started on their Alaskan adventure.

There were passages in it calculated to goad the slayer of decent, kindly, trusting Jack Harrington to an insane agony of remorse. Friendly sentiments and praise of Cowper were to be met continually in the pages. And he had set down much of the tenderness that had welled in his heart as he thought of Rose, ingenuous speculations as dreams and aspirations regarding their future married life. But these things Cowper passed over unmoved. Nor was his examination of the letters and diary close or exhaustive. He had gone over them many times before. For a year he had practiced at the imitation of Harrington's handwriting. The opportunities had been many when he had been left looking after the affairs of the cabin while Jack wandered the mountains searching for signs of gold.

He was now setting about the forgery of a letter to be written to Rose Leighton as with a free, swinging hand he could reproduce Harrington's handwriting with an accuracy rendering him absolutely immune from detection.

More than this ability to write faultlessly as Harrington wrote had been acquired by Cowper in his long, painstaking following of his scheme. He had memorized and noted many of Jack's pet phrases, favorite words, most frequently used slang expressions. Now and then Harrington, whose frankness had remained as boyish as his countenance, had read Cowper extracts from letters he was sending home to Rose, and Martin had seized avidly upon the key and tone of Harrington's sentimentalities. He had keenly treasured every term of endearment or tenderness toward Rose thus revealed by his partner.

For his own satisfaction he penned a dozen or more samples of Harrington's writing, examined them, was wholly satisfied, and then set about writing the letter itself.

It was then he experienced a first qualm of nervousness. It made him turn sharply,

involuntarily, and look toward the bunk. He had experienced a compelling thought that the eyes of the dead man had opened and were watching him. He turned back to the table with a frown, angry at having been controlled for an instant by so insane an idea.

Then as he began the writing of the letter another curious happening intervened to halt him. He had long ago formulated in his mind just what this letter to Rose Leighton should and would contain. He had arranged every paragraph, every sentence, every word.

Yet now he found his mind completely blank of it all. Here and there as he groped about mentally came perhaps a phrase or word, but confusedly.

So he began slowly, almost laboriously. He wrote:

My Adorable Rose: Three cheers, little girl! I'm too happy to write straight. Niftiest news ever! Can you imagine your future husband worth $40,000? Oh, little sweetheart, it's true! What do you think of that? Posimutively! Exactly! Roll of money too big to hold between my two fists!

Martin, who is leaving for —— in the morning and who will send you a money order for $10,000 just to show you it's no dream, has decided to return home himself after he has finished a little necessary business in ——, saying his $40,000 is plenty to establish him in a good business at home. Useless to argue with him. Receive him cordially, especially for my sake as well as his own, for he has been so good a pal. Don't think our separation is due to any quarrel. Everything has gone fine with us. Rather everything has gone fine because of his absolute devotion to me, his unflagging kindness. Eased all the rough spots of camp life for me a hundred times. Did all the mean chores. My job has been just doing the elegant around camp or sauntering out into the country in the ever pleasurable and exciting hunt for gold.

Cowper stopped to read over the letter as far as he had gone. He was highly pleased with it. It was better than the letter he had mapped out and forgotten. He appeared surprisingly to have attained a certain knack and grace of expression he had frequently envied, as he had all of Harrington's accomplishments.

Cowper continued:

You are wondering perhaps why his idea shouldn't also be mine—beat it straight for home. Believe me, it is what my heart is crying at me to do. O, my longing to see you! Dear, you must feel and know that! Yet my duty to our future commands me to remain here. That is, by "here" remaining in this mining country. O, the ache in my heart for your presence! Not even this stroke of good fortune can console me for a second for being so far away from you.

Martin stopped suddenly. Again that feeling, already angrily dismissed as utterly foolish, that the dead man was watching him. Worse this time. There had been a sudden shock of fear that the dead man was not only watching but had arisen and was standing behind him, staring over his shoulder. The impression passed almost instantly. Cowper returned to his writing, words responding promptly, his hand thoroughly responsive also to the production of a perfect imitation of Harrington's chirography:

I am so certain, though, that a great future lies for a man in my profession in this northern mining land. Gold is being found everywhere. Hardly a trip made to town but we hear of new strikes. There is no fake about these reports.

I am going further north therefore, where all this wonderful news is coming from. Now, little girl, please agree with me as to my being right about going. Can you view the idea with patience? All my worry is that you may not approve. But it will not be a long separation, dear. I figure with some of the money in hand soon as a headquarters is decided upon to pick some fine spot near one of the big towns, start a corking little bungalow building, get back home, marry the loveliest girl in all the world, and the best, and bring her back to be at my side while her hero carves out his fortune. Now, how about that?

Martin still is urging me to return home with him when he leaves in the morning, says it is dangerous and foolhardy for a man to travel through the lonesome and wild sections of this country alone, as it is certain the news of our having received $80,000 in gold for our strike must have leaked out and reached the ears of some of the tough and reckless men around these parts. Yet you know my good luck, don't you? So you must not do any worrying. Please don't for a minute. I shall be careful and guarded in traveling and in all my actions. Rest easy about me. In six weeks, at most, you'll have another letter. Then if my prayers are answered, we'll be able to make definite arrangements for our wedding day. Winsome, sweet girl of my heart! I love you! Listen to the night winds passing your windows for they will bear my message: Love of mine forever! God, how dear you are to me! Under the sun and moon and stars there is none so lovely, beautiful, true as you! Adorable Rose!

Here the forger stopped suddenly, startled at himself, staring at the written words of tenderness. They had flowed from him hardly with his realization of what he was writing. He could hardly believe the words had emanated from his brain. The writing of such phrases as these had been his stum-

blingblock in composing the other letter which had disappeared so suddenly, utterly from his mind. But he had written effortlessly, the words cascading from his pen, a curious, warm, electric tingling across his crown, running down his arms to his very finger tips. He brought himself sharply to study the handwriting. He had worked so fast, the quality of the forger may, he feared, have suffered. But it had not. He quickly took up the pen again:

> Don't laugh at my fervor, little wretch! You know my heart and my very soul are speaking. Old boy loves you full measure and running over. Understand that? God keep you safely for me. Only that hope is my comfort. Only that hope is my life! Don't dare let me out of your thoughts for a second. Be with me always in your thoughts as my thoughts are ever with you. You hear me, young lady?
>
> Ever longingly yours,

As he stopped, Cowper suddenly shuddered. Another moment of panic—another obsession of unreasoning, superstitious fear. He looked wildly toward the bunk to make positive the dead man was still there. He had felt certain of a frigidly cold touch upon his wrist like the icy clasp of a corpse's hand.

He grinned with intolerant annoyance at himself, observing that a wind storm was brewing in the hills for the ragged curtains of the open cabin windows were flapping and gusts of cold mountain air were thrusting themselves into the room. But he also heard with nervous impatience the mournful pur and whine of the mountain stream outside roughened by the rising winds.

He read and reread the letter and was wholly satisfied with the production. He knew it to be a greater accomplishment than he had hoped for. Beside the perfect art in the forgery, he had certainly hit off to the very life the nervous, cheerful, smiling style of Harrington's characteristic composition—the outbursts of eloquent sentiment quickly countered by humor and flippancy, fearful with his keen sense of humor that even to his sweetheart he might be made to appear mawkish or ridiculous. In every respect, Cowper knew himself to have done the thing wholly up to the standard of deception he had set. He placed the letter in his own big leather wallet and proceeded to dismantle the cabin.

He packed away the outfit, Harrington's things as well as his own; Harrington's money belt with its forty thousand dollars first of all, placing this in one of his own saddlebags. He saddled his own horse and Harrington's, loaded the bags upon them, then strapped the heavier burdens to the backs of the four mules which had so long been the patient carriers for himself and the friend he had murdered. Finally there was nothing left in the cabin but the rude chairs and tables of their own fashioning, Harrington's discarded clothing, and the sleeping accessories of Harrington's, infolded in which was the corpse. But there was a last thing—the photograph of Rose Leighton. He tore it from the wall and threw it on the crimson-stained breast of his victim. Upon it he heaped Harrington's clothing. Over all he poured kerosene oil from a huge can and then he swirled the can with its opened spout in a circle, dashing oil over walls and ceiling of the hut. He knocked out the windows and threw open the door to permit drafts full sway. Finally he applied a match to a mass of papers he had soaked in oil and piled in the doorway—Jack Harrington's papers, including his diary, including Jack's treasured batch of letters from Rose.

It was slow journeying through the darkness, and Cowper had one more task to perform before he was free to continue his way to the railroad town. He had long ago fixed upon the place—a natural cavern in huge rocks by the mountain stream, some two miles away from the camp. Here he finally stumblingly led Jack Harrington's horse and two of the mules. To be sure, he and Harrington had not been in this railroad town for nearly a year and then had spent only a few days there. They would hardly be remembered. But Cowper was taking no chances. If inquiry were ever made, the facts would show that he arrived singly in the town and with only his proper share of the partnership possessions—his own horse and two of the mules. In the mountain cavern he shot Harrington's horse and two of the mules and left there also his dead partner's saddle and bags.

III.

And now, following the great crime of Martin Cowper, there enters into this narrative the strange and mysterious, an episode more weird than even the killing of young

Jack Harrington in the desolate mountain cabin by the man he had so wholly trusted.

In the first place, then, let it be understood, that Rose Leighton, receiving the forged letter duly inclosing the ten thousand dollars draft on a local bank, fully accepted it as genuine. There was, however, a single oddity regarding the letter which attracted her attention at the time but aroused no slightest suspicion that a spurious hand penned it. But this oddity was later to assume vital importance and requires elucidation at this point.

There had existed a secret trick in the correspondence of Rose and Jack Harrington dating from the note-passing high-school days. Excepting to lovers, the explanation of this secret must perhaps arouse a smile. But let it be a smile of tolerance rather than derision. It was a bit of silliness between them, perhaps, but a precious bit of silliness for all that. It appears that Jack and Rose had created a shorthand code for expressing their tenderest or most perfervid endearments. The code consisted of certain turns, twists, curbs, parabolas, curlicues, and flourishes added to capital letters, the capital letters lending themselves most readily to such treatment. Each turn, twist or flourish had to them the meaning of a certain phrase. One design in a flourish would on any capital letter, for insance, read to either of them, "You are the idol of my heart," or a peculiar curlicue sound singly express, "There are a million kisses in my heart for you." Let these stand as sufficient, the idea of the manner of the code being now made clear.

What Rose Leighton noticed at this first reading was the entire absence of any of these private signs in the formation of the capital letters. But suspicion that a hand other than Harrington's had fashioned the letters did not for an instant arise. She attached no importance to the circumstance. These little secret tricks, she reasoned, might well have been ignored by Jack, in haste to send to her the big news of good fortune and of his immediate further adventure into the Northern gold lands alone.

In all equanimity she deposited the ten thousand dollars in her own bank and resolved to await as patiently as she could the passing of the next six weeks when Jack had promised she was to expect to hear from him again. A communication of tremendous import it would be if Jack had decided on his field of operations, and should announce his departure for the East to claim her for his bride.

Reading what the letter had to say of Martin Cowper, Jack's unstinted praise of him, his request that she be cordial and amiable to Martin on his return, Rose roundly taxed herself for the instinctive dislike she had always held for Cowper. It had ever been unjust, she reproached herself. Still a flashing recollection returned of that one uncouth moment at the dance at Jack's high-school graduation party when Cowper had for an instant held her fiercely in his arms, his deep, black eyes gleaming like the eyes of a jungle animal. And the other occasions when she had detected him slyly regarding her with that same expression lurking under his heavy brows. But, also, she remembered his open worship of Jack, his constant praise of him, his faithful expressions of gratitude for the friendship Jack had so freely and genuinely bestowed upon a boy of misfortune. And how practical had been the proof he had given of the sincerity of this devotion, financing the expedition out of which Jack had realized so snug a fortune, out of which Jack had gained the means to bridge over in a few months the years of tedious waiting they feared were in front of them before they could sensibly marry.

Surely, there would be a warm, heartfelt welcome for Martin Cowper, the proved friend of her beloved. He arrived a week after her receipt of the forged letter. He telephoned her from the railroad station before starting for his own home.

"Martin Cowper!" she cried over the wire, and her voice was electric in its potency to thrill him, "you have been just wonderful to Jack! You are a great, splendid friend for any one to have! Please come up and see me just as soon as you possibly can, Martin, will you? To-night? Oh, that will be good of you! There is so much Jack has left out of his letters—I'm just sure he has!—that I'd like to know."

This first visit of Martin Cowper's to Rose Leighton was one of many. He was not an inspired talker, a ready talker, but bit by bit he managed to paint a comprehensive picture for Rose of the wanderings and adventures of himself and the man he had left dead in the burning cabin by the lonely mountain stream. She was tireless in questioning him. He fed her tender desire for all details con-

cerning Jack as tirelessly, with gloating, triumphant thoughts back of his smoldering black eyes, reveling in his secret knowledge that this adored Jack no longer existed, that time would be sure to make of him a faint memory, a creature of mist, while he, Martin Cowper, would be at Rose Leighton's side in life, vigor, flesh, and blood!

Thus six weeks and more than six weeks passed and of course, no word from Jack. At first, Cowper spoke with a full confidence to Rose, predicting almost from day to day that the morrow would surely bring a letter.

"But you warned him yourself," she finally said, "against venturing about alone with all that money on him!"

He stared questioningly at her.

"He wrote me so in his last letter," she said quickly, in reply to his glance. "Oh, why couldn't he have been satisfied like you with what had been won? Why couldn't he have come straight home to me?"

"Oh, Miss Rose," remonstrated Cowper, "you'll see, he'll be all right. Jack was born under a lucky star. I feel it. Harm would never come his way."

But when more than four months were gone, Cowper admitted to Rose that he himself was deeply worried. At the end of another month, he came to her and said:

"I can't stand this any longer. I can't see you suffer this way. I can't go on imagining all kinds of harm coming to Jack. I'm all the time blaming myself. I oughtn't to have left him. I ought to have stuck. Of course, you understand, Miss Rose, I had to think of my mother and younger brothers and sisters here. But now I can't stand it any longer. I'm going back to Alaska and hunt for Jack."

"Martin Cowper," said Rose, "God bless you!"

She put up her small, soft hands, drew his head down and kissed him on the forehead. His hands started to move toward her, but he clenched them, drew them back, and stood trembling.

"I'll get the first train out in the morning, Miss Rose," he said abruptly, took up his hat and paced to the street door.

She followed him to clasp and press his large, rough, bony-fingered hand between her soft ones and whisper fervently anew a blessing upon him.

Cowper carried out with every appearance of an honest endeavor his "hunt" for Jack Harrington. He appeared in many towns and settlements in Alaska, some of them very remote, making broad and open inquiry for the missing man, leaving ample, careful descriptions of him. On three occasions when men thought they had genuine clews to give him, he elaborately prepared to follow these clews, and did, even to the extent in two instances of hiring searching parties to travel miles into the wildernesses in the searches. He wrote tersely but gently, affectionately, to Rose Leighton, reporting his "hopes" aroused from time to time and eventually, of course, the failures of the clews and hopes.

Finally—it was nearly a year now that Jack Harrington had been missing—Cowper wrote to Rose all regretfully that he was at his wits' end, that he had become hopeless. He asked her to believe he had done everything his own mind could suggest, had followed every suggestion that had come from her. He said he was heartbroken, that there seemed nothing further to do but give up the quest. He wrote that he was going to Seattle, gave her the name of the hotel at which he would register, and begged that she would write to him at that address to let him know she was bearing up bravely, as he felt sure so plucky a little woman would bear up, come what might.

He went to the hotel in Seattle and awaited a letter from her there. His hope was high that she would ask him to return that she might lean upon him for comfort, he, the friend, the tangible link to connect her with the mysteriously missing Jack. Or she might, as she had hinted several times in her letters, come out to join him in a "hunt" to be started anew. His anxiety became acute as many days passed without a letter from her. He had always to remind himself that the mails from Alaska to the East were slow, that following his letter of hopelessness, it might be some days before Rose Leighton could sufficiently regain her composure and her courage to write to him. And then a letter from her arrived. The big, lanky, black-haired man crushed it to his lips passionately. What he had most dearly hoped for was promised realization in the near future. She said she was considering the matter of joining him in the West, and under his protection and that of her brother renewing the search for Jack Harrington. Her faith in Jack, she said, was absolute. She knew he was not willfully absenting himself, had no heart to

jilt her. In time, in time, Cowper reflected, he might sow seeds of suspicion that would make her believe Harrington faithless and what more natural then, that he in his indignation at that solution of the problem, should offer her a truer, greater love and that she would, in such circumstances, accept it? But this was a matter for future scheming. Rose concluded her letter by saying that she had not fully resolved on taking the journey. Then she wound up:

If it is not imposing on one who has already acted so generously and nobly, who has sacrificed himself so willingly, I would ask you, Martin, to remain in Seattle a few weeks longer for final word from me.

And she had signed: "Affectionately, Rose."

"Affectionately!"

The weeks had passed and he was expecting another letter from her daily, the letter to contain her decision.

There came a night when after making a futile inquiry at the desk for this letter, hoping it might have arrived in the late mail, he turned from the desk impatiently and sought his room. He slammed the door on entering, switched on the lights, threw his hat aside, walked over to a window, and looked gloomily down at the brilliantly lighted but half-deserted streets below.

A rather short, stocky man stepped noiselessly on his rubber-heeled shoes out of the bathroom of Martin's suite and was in two seconds standing directly behind him, within arm's length, before Cowper sensed his presence and turned. It was to face a blue steel automatic in the stocky man's hand.

"Martin Cowper," said he, as with his disengaged hand he drew back his coat lapel and displayed a gold shield, "you are under arrest for the murder of John Harrington."

Cowper straightened stiffly and gulped. His face whitened. Then he glowered.

"What damned fool makes that charge against me?" he demanded. "And you must be a damned fool to pay any attention to it."

"I don't look at it that way," replied the stocky man, keen-eyed and quiet. "My experience is that the biggest damned fools are murderers. If you are not guilty you have nothing to fear, you know."

IV.

By the simple though nerve-racking process of absolutely refusing to answer questions, though he was plied with them for hours at a time, to permit himself, only the utterance of a single phrase, "I am innocent," Cowper withstood the efforts of prolonged third-degree examinations. They were as nothing, however, to the stark hours of sleepless agony in his cell with his brain wildly, feverishly demanding where he had failed in his diabolically cunning scheme of murder.

What in the fabric of false circumstances he had built to cheat detection and the judgment of mankind, had given way to let suspicion in? His fear-haunted mind suggested this circumstance or that, but never the right one. Of the cause that was to bring full retribution upon him for his hideous crime, he nor any man could have possibly conceived. The striking, word revelation came suddenly, strangely to Rose Leighton. It arose from the letter that Cowper had forged in the desolate cabin on the night of the murder with the body of John Harrington stretched on the bunk, his glazed eyes staring fixedly upward. Not that she began to suspect that the letter was a forgery. In all confidence as to its genuineness, she had taken the letter out of its place of keeping, a cherished letter of a romance passing into memory, merely fondly to read again the last, dear words of her lover. And with the wish fervently fathering the thought, she had sought against her own knowledge to find in the capital letters—in some one of them, or perhaps two or three at least, signs of their private love code. Such a discovery would have been very precious to her. So, hopelessly, yet clinging to her affectionate desire as a woman surely will, she began the close conning of the capital letters, making a most searching, loving examination of each.

"My Adorable Rose," the letter began. Here had been Cowper's only false move in the writing of it. Rose had been struck by the inept capitalization of the word adorable, coming from Jack, punctilious for correct form in writing. And now Rose wondered if perhaps this capital 'A' had not some special significance. Was there a secret love code message indicated in it by some slight turn or twist of the pen? But as closest examination revealed that it did not, she began going over the letter from capital to capital.

Suddenly these capital letters—those of the first paragraph—grouped in a manner to cause interest and surprise:

My Adorable Rose: Three cheers, little girl! I'm too happy to write straight. Niftiest news ever! Can you imagine your future husband worth $40,000? Oh, little sweetheart, it's true! What do you think of that? Positmutively! Exactly! Roll of money too big for my two fists!

What Rose Leighton observed was that the capital letters fronting each of the sentences in this first paragraph went to spell a name—MARTIN COWPER!

It was a curious discovery, merely a coincidence, of course, she thought, but highly interesting, and she continued following the capitals to see if those which followed might thus accidentally spell out words.

When she came to the end of the next paragraph it was with her great, sea-blue eyes widened in horror, her lips and face white:

Martin who is leaving for —— in the morning and who will send you a money order for $10,000 just to show you it's no dream, has decided to return home after he has finished a little necessary business things in ——, saying his $40,000 is plenty to establish him in a good business at home. Useless to argue with him. Receive him cordially, especially for my sake as well as his own, for he has been a good pal. Don't think our separation is due to any quarrel. Everything has gone fine with us. Rather everything has gone fine because of his absolute amazing devotion to me. Eased all the rough spots of camp life for me. Did all the mean chores.

"MURDERED!"

My job was just doing the elegant around camp or sauntering out in the country looking for gold.

You are wondering perhaps why his idea shouldn't also be mine—beat it straight for home. Believe me, it was what my heart was crying at me to do. Oh, my longing to see you! Dear, you must know that! Yet my duty to our future commands me to remain here.

"MY BODY," the capitals then read to the wondering, trembling girl.

That is by "here" remaining in this mining country. Oh, the ache in my heart for your presence! Not even this fine stroke of fortune consoles me for a second for being so far away from you.

I am so certain, though, that a great future lies for a man in my profession in this northern mining land. Gold is being found everywhere. Hardly a trip made to town but we hear of new strikes. There is no fake in these reports.

Here was mysteriously wrought a sixth word—"TO-NIGHT."

The girl stopped. She would not go on. It was merely coincidence, a wretched, gruesome coincidence. But in the same instant, she felt it could not be. She must go on. Perhaps the capitals would dwindle into a mere jumble and then her mind would be relieved of its growing, awful fear.

I am going further North where all this wonderful news is coming from. Now, little girl, please agree with me as to my being right about going. Can you view the idea with patience? All my worry is that you may not approve. But it will not be a long separation, dear. I figure with some of the money in hand, soon as a headquarters is decided upon, to pick some fine spot near one of the big towns, start a corking little bungalow building, get back home, marry the loveliest girl in all the world, and the best, and bring her back to my side while her hero carves out his fortune. Now, how about that?

Still the capitals continued to signify a clear, intelligible, grim message. "IN CABIN" were the last words they formed.

Fearsomely, her heart wildly beating, Rose continued her study of the letter:

Martin still urging me to return home with him when he leaves in the morning, says it is dangerous and foolhardy for a man to travel through the lonesome and wild sections of this country alone as it is certain the news of our having received $80,000 in cash for our strike must have leaked out and reached the ears of some of the tough and reckless men around these parts. Yet you know my good luck, don't you? So you must not do any worrying. Please do not for a minute. I shall be careful and guarded in traveling and in all my actions. Rest easy about me. In six weeks at most you will have another letter. Then if my prayers are answered, we'll be able to make definite arrangements for our wedding day.

"MY SPIRIT——"

Winsome, sweet girl of my heart! I love you! Listen to the night winds passing your window, for they will bear my message: Love of mine forever!

"WILL——"

God, how dear you are to me! Under the sun and moon and stars there is none so lovely, beautiful, true as you! Adorable Rose! Don't laugh at my fervor, little wretch. You know my heart and my very soul are speaking. Understand that?

"GUARD YOU!"

God keep you safely for me. Only that hope is my comfort. Only that hope is my life! Don't dare let me out of your thoughts for a second. Be with me always in your thoughts as my thoughts are ever with you. You hear me, young lady?

Ever yours lovingly, Jack.

"GOOD-BYE!"

Rose seized a pen and, with a hand she had to fight hard to steady, wrote in full the message that the letter had creepingly, uncannily revealed:

"MARTIN COWPER MURDERED MY BODY IN CABIN TO-NIGHT. MY SPIRIT WILL GUARD YOU. GOOD-BYE, JACK!"

She went directly to her father with the letter. A practical, hard-headed old business man, he would have put it aside, laid the tragic message of the capitals wholly to accident, a strange, an amazing accident, but an accident nevertheless. But Rose was insistent. Her distress at his attitude was overpowering. Fearing for the safety of his daughter's reason, he called her elder brother, Frank, a celebrated lawyer, and the family physician into consultation. The doctor, a venerable man, and the lawyer, surprised Mr. Leighton.

Her brother Frank came to Rose's support. Very sensibly he pointed out to his father that an expedition to the cabin Cowper and Jack Harrington had occupied must be of highest value in either case—if the message of the letter had ghastly significance, the cabin would yield corroborative evidence of the crime, if the message was meaningless, merely a queer, accidental juxtaposition of the capitals in the letter, an examination of the camp site and its surroundings must show its falsity and set at rest the mind of his distraught sister.

Frank then was charged with the investigation and set out immediately. The charred remains of the cabin was the first grim evidence he came upon. The discovery of gold by Harrington had been in country ten miles away from the camp site, and Cowper had reasoned correctly that no prospectors' steps would be led that way. Nor in all probability ever would until time had obliterated all tangible evidence of the murder. But now there was recovered the blackened, withered corpse of Harrington. Surgical experts were later to be able to establish the evidence of the knife wound, and from the tissue of the lungs the fact that Harrington was not suffocated but was dead before the cabin burned. A ring Rose had given him was on his clenched and blackened hand to make positive his identification.

And there was the proof that Martin Cowper and Jack Harrington had received eighty thousand dollars in cash—gold and notes—from the big mining corporation, ten thousand dollars of Harrington's share Martin Cowper having paid over to Rose Leighton as a necessary measure to build for himself a character of honesty and ward off suspicion, thirty thousand dollars of which forty-thousand dollars share, however, Cowper had stolen. He had not dared deposit this money in any bank. It was found on his person the night of his arrest.

Out of the wreck of the cabin, Frank Leighton also brought a charred remnant of Harrington's diary. It went to prove a motive of revenge and jealousy additional to robbery for among its scarred pages was one containing Jack's notes of the sudden, cowardly assault Cowper had made upon him when he told Martin of his engagement to Rose, of Cowper's confession of his own love for Rose.

The strange letter itself could never have been used against Cowper save as he himself made it possible. He was shown a typewritten copy of it with the capitals printed in red, and told of the secret code that had existed between Rose and Jack.

And whereas he had held a graven countenance and a steady nerve against all the efforts and skill of the men of the law, against the evidence gathering to crush him, facing the uncanny, unearthly message of the letter, remembering sickeningly the queer sensations which had assailed him when he was writing it, Cowper crumpled and went staggering with his back to the wall of his cell, his face green with a horrid pallor, his lips white and trembling, his eyes staring with that terror born of the greatest of fears, that of the Unknown!

There was no remorse in him. Only blind anger against Fate, and his ghastly fear.

"Damn him!" he finally found voice to cry. "He's beaten me. He always could—always did—beat me! Damn him!"

Was it mere chance serving to uncover a heartless, hideous crime?

Or was it what Rose Leighton then believed, now believes, and always will believe, which is that back of the chair of the murderer as he sat forging the letter to her in the cabin that night, stood the wraith of her lover with ghostly fingers, so unearthly light of touch that Martin Cowper could not feel their grasp upon his wrist, while his assassin's hand was inexorably guided and directed so that the villainous creature in writing this letter thinking, in the fatuous conceit of the criminal, it was forever to exculpate him from the consequences of his crime, was in reality, under the control of a terribly wronged man's spirit, inditing his own death warrant?

A Chat With You

THOUGH we publish, from fortnight to fortnight, all sorts of stories—except, we hope, uninteresting ones—you will not often find in THE POPULAR the type of story which is most conveniently described as "fantastic."

We mean the sort of tale that has for its setting Mars or Venus, the moon, or some other planet. The story of the lost kingdom in the middle of Africa or the center of the earth, the novel in which the fancy is completely liberated from the trammels of fact and the world as we know it, and sails off like a loose balloon or deserted bark on a capricious and uncharted course.

It is not that we have any prejudice against such stories as a class. All we ask of a story is, that it be interesting and reasonably persuasive. There are dozens of these fantastic stories we wish we might have published.

HAD Poe been alive to-day and willing to allow us to cut some of his more acutely horrible bits of description, we would probably be issuing "The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym" complete in one installment. We would never have rejected "The Diamond Lens," by Fitz-James O'Brien. The best of the Jules Verne romances, "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea," would have been most welcome, and probably several of the others.

The earlier scientific fantasies of H. G. Wells would have been POPULAR stories, had there been a POPULAR when he was writing them. We have always regretted that we were born a little too late to give the first presentation of "King Solomon's Mines" and "She," by H. Rider Haggard. Indeed, we published the sequel to "She," "Ayesha," in the first year or so of our existence.

THE great charm and great curse of fantastic stories as a class is that when they are good they are very, very good, and when they are bad, they are superlatively rotten.

We have read many of them in manuscript, and we know. Some of them begin well enough, but when even the human characters are lifeless and lack humanity, we want to get back out of the cold of interstellar space, into the warm sunlight of the Southwest, away from the society of dreary supermen of the future into the company of the cowboys of Knibbs or Coolidge or Bower.

Once in a long time there is an exception. Now we arrive at the exception.

IT is a novel called "Wildfire," written by L. H. Robbins. It is a story laid in the future—a future which seems at once wonderful and sanely reasonable.

The people in it are just like the people about us—almost like ourselves. Lots of things have not changed. New York is still New York, and the New England hills are still green and beautiful. There are still labor troubles. There is envy and strife among men, some good, some bad, but mostly indifferent. At the same time there are changes, improvements, intensifications in the drama of life. The plot hinges more or less on a discovery already hinted at by the scientists of to-day—a method of loosing at will the stored-up forces of atomic energy. This is the first novel of its kind in years. It starts well and gets better as it goes on. It will reach you complete in the next issue of THE POPULAR. A wonder tale of a sound basis and high quality, certainly worth two dollars between cloth covers—a real book!

AS much by accident as design there appears another tale—of the near future this time—in the same issue of the magazine. It is called "Sargasso," and is by Robert Welles Ritchie, famous both as a war correspondent and a story-teller.

The Sargasso he writes of is not in the sea, but in the air, somewhere over the impenetrable jungle of equatorial Africa. This is a story of the great passenger dirigibles that will soon carry across the ocean and around the world, those who have the price and are willing to pay it. Here you have all the excitement of the most thrilling trip, with no danger and at trifling expense. It is an adventure story that gets hold of you.

BACK to the earth and the people of to-day and the slang and laughter of the minute! H. C. Witwer gives us in the next issue one of his funniest stories, "A Flash in the Pan."

Also, Clarence Cullen is represented with a yarn, "The Best Laid Plans," full of breezy humor and the indescribable charm that is making Cullen famous.

Also in the next issue is a story of the American navy, by Ralph D. Paine, who was selected by the government to write the official history of the navy's work in the war.

THIS might seem enough for any issue of any magazine, but it is not enough for THE POPULAR. There is another funny story, "Custard's Last Pie," by Frank Condon, there is a story of crime and intrigue by Charles Somerville, there is an up-to-date story of the new Texas oil fields by Grinstead, there is an unusual and gripping story, "The Counsel for the Expense," by Roy Hinds. Then, of course, there is the conclusion of Howard's "Dusk to Daylight," and another big installment of Metcalfe's great serial of hypnotism and high finance.

All this, if you have read so far, will lead you to think that you would do well to order your copy now, if you want to be sure of getting any at all.

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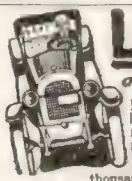

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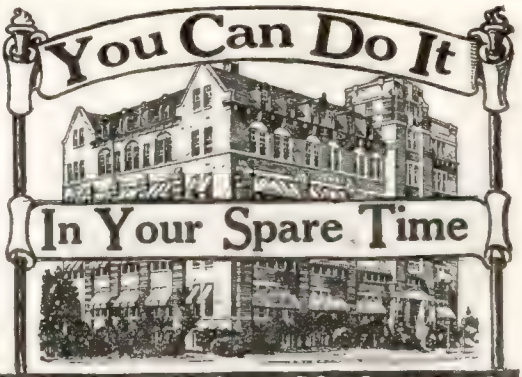

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.....Western Union Courses	.....Lawyer
.....Telephone Engineer	.....Business Manager
.....Draftsman and Designer	.....Cert. Public Accountant
.....Automobile Engineer	.....Accountant and Auditor
.....Automobile Repairman	.....Bookkeeper
.....Airplane Mechanic	.....Stenographer
.....Fire Insurance Expert	.....Gen'l Education Course
.....Sanitary Engineer	.....Com. School Branches
.....Heating and Ventilating Engineer	.....Electrical Engineer
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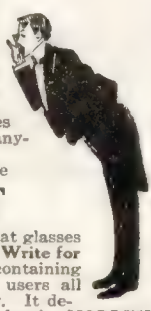

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..... Electric Light and Power Superintendent	.....Accountant and Auditor
..... Hydroelectric Engineer	.....Bookkeeper
..... Telephone Engineer	.....Stenographer
..... Telegraph Engineer	..... Fire Insurance Expert
..... Wireless Operator	..... Sanitary Engineer
..... Architect	..... Master Plumber
..... Building Contractor	.....Heating and Ventilating Engineer
..... Civil Engineer	.....Automobile Engineer
..... Structural Engineer	.....Automobile Repairman
..... Mechanical Engineer	.....Airplane Mechanic
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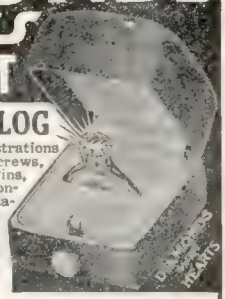

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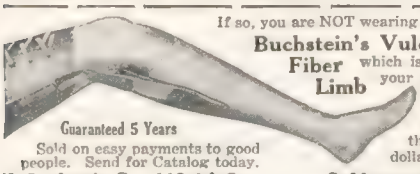

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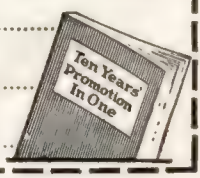

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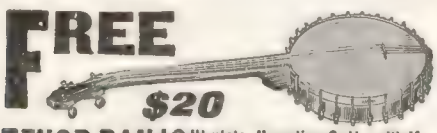

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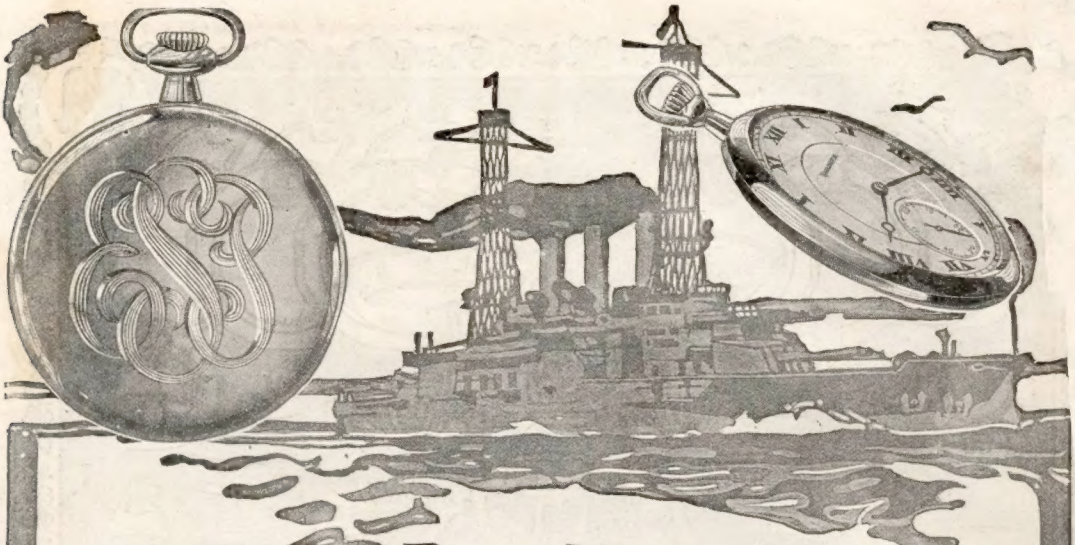

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